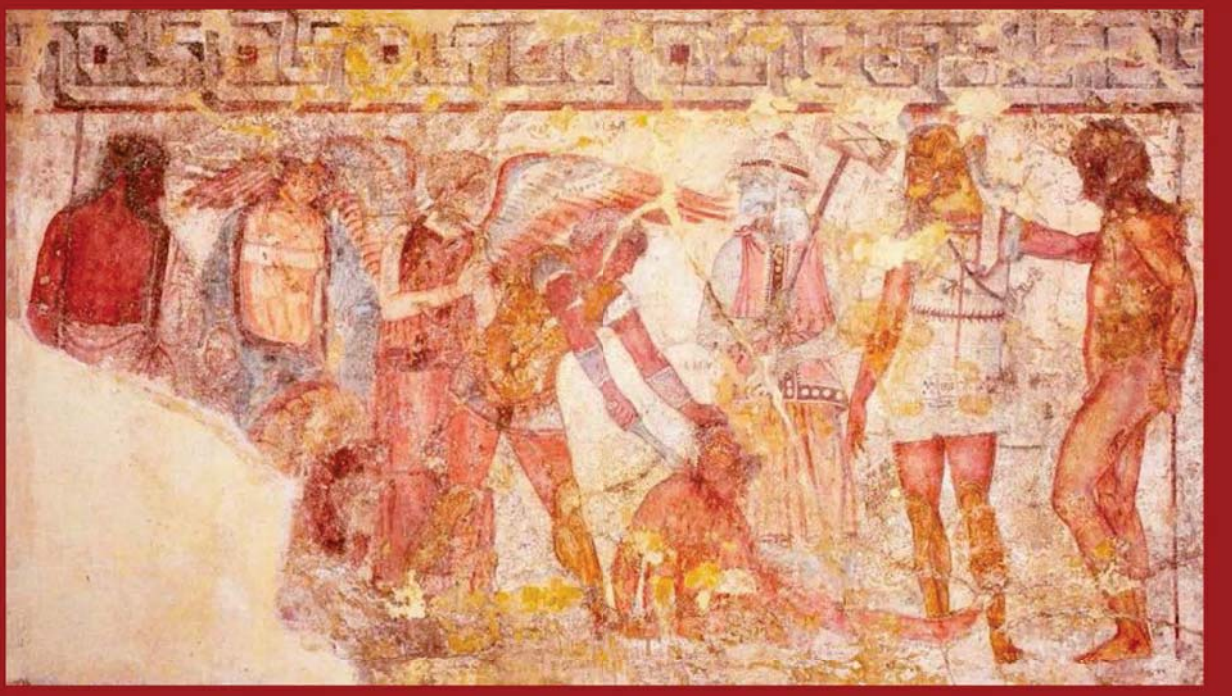
THE ETRUSCAN RELIGION



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THE RELIGION OF THE ETRUSCANS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following works are so frequently used throughout the book that it seemed appropriate to give abbreviations to them:

ANRW = *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* ed. H. Temporini. Berlin, 1972–.

CIE = *Corpus Inscriptionum Etruscarum.*

CSE = *Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum.*

Dizionario = *Dizionario della Civiltà Etrusca,* ed. M. Cristofani. Florence, 1985.

EHCA = *An Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology,* ed. N. T. de Grummond. 2 vols. Westport, 1996.

ES = *Etruskische Spiegel,* ed. E. Gerhard, G. Körte, and A. Klügmann. 5 vols. Berlin, 1840–1897.

ET = H. Rix, *Etruskische Texte.* 2 vols. Tübingen, 1991.

Etruscan Painting = S. Steingräber, *Etruscan Painting: Catalogue Raisonné of Etruscan Wall Paintings,* ed. D. Ridgway and F. R. Ridgway. New York, 1986.

LIMC = *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*

LPRH = *Les Étrusques, les plus religieux des hommes: État de la recherche sur la religion étrusque. Actes du colloque international Grand Palais 17–19.11.1992,* ed. D. Briquel and F. Gaultier. Paris, 1997.

Rasenna = *Rasenna: Storia e civiltà degli etruschi,* ed. M. Pallottino et al. Milan, 1986.

ThLE = *Thesaurus Linguae Etruscae,* ed. M. Pandolfini Angeletti. Rome, 1978–.

TLE = *Testimonia Linguae Etruscae,* ed. M. Pallottino. 2nd ed. Florence, 1968.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF ETRUSCAN RELIGION

Nancy Thomson de Grummond

"Religion is in fact the best known facet of the Etruscan civilization."[1] In making this statement, Massimo Pallottino noted that very many of the archaeological remains of the Etruscans and the literary sources about the Etruscans in Latin and Greek have a connection, in one way or another, with religion. The well-known statement of Livy describing the Etruscans as being the nation most devoted to religion, excelling others in their knowledge of religious practices (5.1.6; see Appendix B, Source no. 1.1), provides evidence that the ancients also recognized the pervasiveness of religion in Etruscan civilization.

It is a little odd, given the acknowledged importance of this subject, that there are relatively few general, sustained accounts of Etruscan religion, and there is as yet none today in the English language. It is also surprising that there does not seem to exist a critical review of the history of the study of Etruscan religion, which might help to evaluate the original sources and frame the problems and methodology for current study of the topic. In this introduction we shall consider the latter subject—the history of scholarship on Etruscan religion—and at the end attempt to show how this particular book relates to the former topic: the need for a comprehensive treatment in English. Here and throughout the book, there will be an emphasis on the evidence from written sources, and accordingly, frequent reference will be made to a special feature of this volume, the appendix on Selected Latin and Greek Literary Sources on Etruscan Religion (Appendix B).

In antiquity the study of and theorizing about Etruscan religion was already well developed, with scholarship that we may distribute into three main categories: canonical texts, philosophical treatises, and historical/antiquarian writings.

THE CANONICAL TEXTS

There were studies of the many different Etruscan texts having to do with the *Etrusca disciplina*,* that body of original Etruscan religious literature describing the cosmos and the Underworld, as well as prescribing various rituals and ways to interpret and act upon messages from the gods. The names of the texts that have survived include the *Libri rituales, Libri fatales, Libri de fulguratura* ("on lightning") and *Libri Acheruntici* (concerning Acheron, i.e., the Underworld), as well as books named after the two principal Etruscan prophets, who were called Tages and Vegoia in Latin: *Libri Tagetici* and *Libri Vegoici.* Both Etruscans and Romans were involved in this study, which included translating and interpreting the old texts and teaching them to appropriate individuals. The practitioners of this type of study perhaps relate to their material in a manner similar to that of the Jewish and Early Christian scholars who studied, taught, and commented on their religious literature.

Unfortunately, we know so little of these writings and teachings that we are unable to discern what, if any, may have been their theological concerns or what debates may have enlivened their encounters.[2] Further, it is a perennial frustration in studies of Etruscan religion that little about Etruscan prophetic or priestly texts can be confidently traced back earlier than the first century BCE, when in fact Etruscan civilization had become fully submerged in the dominant Roman culture.

Among the names that have survived are individuals who lived in the first century BCE, such as Aulus Caecina from Volaterrae, friend of Cicero, who wrote *De Etrusca disciplina,* a publication that has been described as a "major event" in the intellectual life of the Late Republic;[3] the admired and erudite Nigidius Figulus, who composed books on dreams, private augury, and divining from entrails, and a brontoscopic calendar (the latter surviving in a Greek translation; see Appendix A for the text and a full account of Figulus); and Tarquitius Priscus,[4] friend of Varro, known to have written an *Ostentarium Tuscum,* a translation of an Etruscan work on prodigies and signs, as well as a book on prognosticating from trees. Tarquitius also produced a translation of the cosmic prophecies of the nymph Vegoia, a fragment of which has survived (Appendix B, Source no. II.1).[5] Another figure in this category is Cornelius Labeo, whose date is unknown but who seems to have written translations and commentaries, in fifteen books, on the prophecies of Vegoia and Tages.[6]

Also in this category are the many shadowy figures who are mentioned as being consulted for advice by the Romans, the soothsaying priests or *haruspices,** as for example, Umbricius Melior, described as "most skilled," the Early Imperial soothsayer of Galba.[7] Sulla had his *haruspex* Postumius, and the famous Spurinna tried to warn Caesar about the Ides of March.[8] There must have been many more Romanized Etruscans involved in these pursuits (there are a few more such figures whose names alone have come down to us), for we know that as a general principle, the Romans thought the Etruscan teachings to be so important that they had a practice of sending their sons to Etruria to study this ancient lore.[9]

PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS

The foregoing individuals we have mentioned may be recognized as real practitioners of Etruscan or Etruscan-style religion, and as such they had their own bias. Our second division is related, but it manifests a different approach: intellectuals with a concern for philosophy. There is no more significant surviving text for the study of Etruscan religious practice than the treatise on divination by Cicero, written around the time of the death of Caesar, ca. 44 BCE. In *De divinatione* Cicero presents a vivid debate on the reliability of divination in its various manifestations, with the principal interlocutors represented as his brother Quintus and himself.[10] The evidence presented on both sides is all the more interesting because Cicero had intimate knowledge of the subject from his own experiences as an augur of state religion.

This first-century Roman debate is of course sophisticated and probably shows some thought patterns well beyond any present in Etruscan religious teaching. Quintus Cicero supports credence in divination from the standpoint of Stoic philosophy, and Marcus Cicero, while rejecting actual faith in divination, in the end admits the importance of traditional rites and ceremonies solely for political aims. He has great contempt for most divinatory practices and heaps scorn upon, for example, the important Etruscan revelation myth of the prophetic child Tages.[11] What is most important in the treatise for our purposes is the abundant evidence about the principal Etruscan methods of divining, by reading of entrails and by interpretation of lightning (cf. Appendix B, Section VIII). When we can sort these out from Roman interpolation, we have some of the most meaningful reports from antiquity on Etruscan practices.

The treatise of Seneca, *Quaestiones naturales,* written shortly before his death in 65 CE, also promotes philosophy but is fascinating for its sympathetic presentation of the point of view of Etruscan priests. We have a clear statement of the contrast of thought between the two sides, in the famous declaration that "this is the difference between us [philosophers] and the Etruscans, who have consummate skill in interpreting lightning: we think that because clouds collide, lightning is emitted; but they think the clouds collide in order that lightning may be emitted" (Appendix B, Source no. VIII.1). In fact, we know little about the Etruscan studies of the natural sciences, but the passage in Seneca tends to confirm suspicions that their observation of natural phenomena was carried out with religious premises and conclusions.

HISTORICAL/ANTIQUARIAN TEXTS

A third and rather different brand of scholarship is that of the historians, philologists, and antiquarians. Livy (d. 12 or 17 CE) transmitted a great deal of information in his narratives of Roman/Etruscan politics and war, such as in his frequent references to the Etruscan federal sanctuary of the shrine of Voltumna (3.23.5, 25.7, 61.2; 5.17.6; 6.2.2). Verrius Flaccus, the tutor of the grandsons of Augustus, wrote a treatise on Etruscan matters (*Libri rerum Etruscarum*) that has not survived, but we do have some of his observations as preserved in the epitome by Festus of his *De significatu verborum,* which contained rare and obsolete words and accompanying archaic antiquarian lore. Vitruvius, a practicing

architect of the time of Augustus, has left a precise account of the theoretical and practical aspects of building and locating an Etruscan temple (*De architectura* 1.7.1–2, 4.7; Appendix B, Source nos. V.2, V.3).

The pure antiquarians are especially useful. They were intrigued with the past and recorded information objectively about Etruscan religion out of curiosity. A great variety of Etruscan topics was treated by the most learned of all Romans, Varro (116–27 BCE), ranging from the practice of sacrificing a pig for a ritual pact (*De re rustica* 2.4.9), to the Etruscan rite for laying out a city (*Etruscus ritus**; *De lingua Latina* 5.143; see Appendix B, Source no. IV.2). He wrote a treatise on human and divine matters of antiquity (i.e., what was ancient at that time, 47 BCE), the loss of which is most unfortunate. It contained fascinating material on the lore of lightning, such as that other gods beside Jupiter, for example, Minerva and Juno, were allowed to throw lightning bolts (Appendix B, Source no. VIII.7). It was Varro who provided the famous and precious reference to Vertumnus as the "chief god of Etruria" (*De lingua Latina* 5.46; Appendix B, Source no. VI.3).

He was of course frequently quoted by other antiquarians, such as Pliny the Elder (d. 79 CE), who drew from him information about the decoration of Etruscan shrines, in his book on painting and modeling sculpture (*HN* 35.154), and about the tomb of Porsena, in his section on building stones and architecture (*HN* 36.91; Appendix B, Source no. V.5). Pliny included a good bit of Etruscan material in his encyclopedic *Historia Naturalis* as part of his goal of being compendious, and in this way he preserved many interesting fragments of information from various sources, such as lore about signs from the birds in his sections on zoology; he refers to an illustrated Etruscan treatise (*HN* 10.28, 30, 33, 35–49).

Among the antiquarians we may also classify selected Latin poets who drew on early Roman and Etruscan antiquities for one reason or another, during that period of the first century BCE when we detect so much other activity regarding Etruscan religion. Vergil, exposed to Etruscan culture in his native Mantua, has left us his stirring description of the warrior priest from Pisa, Asilas, skilled in the interpretation of all the signs from the gods, embracing entrails, the stars, birds, and lightning (*Aeneid* 10.246–254).

No text from the Romans is more important for studying Etruscan divinity than the poem of Propertius of Perusia about the statue of Vertumnus set up in Rome (4.2; Appendix B, Source no. VI.1). It expresses vividly the Etruscan tendency to be vague or ambivalent about the gender and other characteristics of a particular deity.

Ovid, too, has related the myth of Vertumnus, and interestingly has the god change sex to appear as an old woman in the story of the courtship of Pomona (*Meta.* 14.623–771; see Appendix B, Source no. VI.2). His calendar in the *Fasti,* replete with lore of early religion in Rome, is relevant but must be used with caution, both because the poet is sometimes inaccurate in his citations (and he does not tell his sources) and because the material on the Etruscans is certainly colored by the Roman context. Of course, all the poetic literature—of Vergil, Propertius, Ovid, and others—must be read critically as just that, rich in allusions, sometimes created for the occasion by the poet and not necessarily reflecting Etruscan belief or practice.

After this, we can note a crowd of later Roman polymaths who took an interest in Etruscan culture, probably most often using some of the writers we have already cited. Festus (second century CE), as noted, prepared an epitome of Verrius Flaccus, and this was in turn epitomized by Paulus Diaconus in the eighth century. The grammarian Censorinus (third century CE) wrote on a wide range of topics such as the origin of human life and time (Appendix B, Source no. III.6). The indefatigable and generally trustworthy Servius (fourth century CE)[12] has left an abundance of observations on the Etruscans in his commentary on Vergil's works. He took a great interest in augural lore, and though he did not always refer directly to the Etruscans, his comments are useful in augmenting our knowledge of this important branch of Etruscan religious praxis.[13] Macrobius (probably fifth century CE), whose *Saturnalia* is a potpourri of antiquarian, scientific, and especially philological lore, provides in his dilettante's way little nuggets of Etruscan information, for example, on the use of the sacred bronze plow in founding a city (*Sat.* 5.19.13 [Appendix B, Source no. IV.5]) or on the good omen seen in the wool of sheep when it was naturally tinted purple or golden (*Sat.* 3.7.2 [Appendix B, Source no. IV.6]). Finally, we may include in this group Arnobius, a rhetorician and Christian convert living in Africa in the late fourth and early fifth century CE, who assembled his text intelligently from other sources, as shown by his passage quoting Varro on the group gods such as the Penates recognized by the Etruscans (*Adv. nat.*, 3.40 [Appendix B, Source no. IX.3]).

An absolutely singular case is that of Martianus Capella. He, too, flourished in the atmosphere of North Africa in the fifth century, leaving as his chief work a compendious pedantic allegory on the marriage of Mercury and Philology (*De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*).[14] Regarded as eccentric, tedious, and superficial in its discourse on the seven liberal

arts, the text of Martianus is nonetheless of the greatest importance for Etruscan studies. It contains the single most significant text in Latin for understanding the Etruscan pantheon and cosmos (1.45–61; Appendix B, Source no. III.4). Martianus sets the stage for the wedding of Mercury and Philology by sending out invitations to gods all around the sky, and he depicts them as inhabiting sixteen main divisions.

Scholars are united in regarding this number as a clue that Martianus was following the Etruscan system of dividing the sky (cf. Cicero, *De div.* 2.18.42, Appendix B, Source no. III.3), and have found that the scheme agrees in some striking details with that other famous document of the Etruscan cosmos, the bronze model of a sheep's liver found near Piacenza (see Fig. II.2).[15] The use of deities who may be readily equated with well-known Etruscan gods, along with divinities who are completely obscure in Roman religion, suggests that we may indeed have here a reflection of an original Etruscan doctrine.

The antiquarian trend continues in the Middle Ages in isolated instances, such as the writings of the Byzantine scholar Johannes Lydus, who taught Latin philosophy and championed that language in sixth-century Constantinople. It is he who recorded the thunder calendar of Nigidius Figulus (Appendix A; note the discussion of the career and writings of Lydus there). In addition, he left a quite lengthy discussion of Tages (*De ostentis,* 2.6.B; Appendix B, Source no. II.5). The texts that had come to be associated with the name of Tages continued to be of interest long after Etruscan and Roman religion were no longer operative. Isidore of Seville also mentions Tages (*Etymol.* 8.9.34–35, seventh century). The encyclopedic text, the *Suda,* has left a strange account of creation, undoubtedly affected by biblical precedents, attributed to the Etruscans (tenth century; Appendix B, Source no. III.5).

The Etruscans were largely forgotten during the medieval centuries. When interest in them was reborn during the Renaissance in the former Etruscan territories,[16] it was some time before their religion became a focus of study. That famous old fraud Annio da Viterbo (d. 1502) was interested in the mythology of Etruria, but he had as distorted a view of the gods[17] as he had of the Etruscan language, which he translated quite wrongly. In the seventeenth century, the Scotsman Thomas Dempster,[18] serving as a law professor in Pisa, pioneered serious research on the Etruscans with his treatise *De Etruria regali libri septem* ("Seven Books on Etruria of the Kings"). A section near the beginning was devoted to Etruscan religion, drawing on various texts he had available. The work was not published until over a century later and thus had little impact until the following century.

In spite of the veritable mania for the Etruscans (*Etruscheria*) of the eighteenth century,[19] few yet took an interest in the topic of religion. The Accademia Etrusca,[20] founded at Cortona in 1726, met regularly and heard papers and reports, but its members and other contemporary scholars seem to have been more interested in Etruscan architecture and material antiquities, along with the Etruscan language.[21] Their studies often embraced Roman archaeology, and of some interest for our theme is a treatise on the origins and development of shrines in the ancient world, based on Roman numismatics especially, presented by the academician Filippo Venuti and published in 1738 among the *Saggi di dissertazioni* of the Accademia Etrusca.[22] A remarkable study of "Etruscan philosophy" by Giovanni Maria Lampredi, a young priest and tutor in Florence, also belongs to this period. *Saggio sopra la filosofia degli antichi Etruschi* (1756) drawing on Seneca especially, argues that the Etruscans had an "emanative system" for the cosmos tied to Pythagoreanism and Stoicism. Lampredi went to some pains to explain the contradiction he perceived between Seneca and the account in the *Suda.*[23]

In the nineteenth century, as part of the scientific trend manifest in various branches of Etruscan studies,[24] we find the first extended consideration of Etruscan religion based on a rigorously critical assemblage of texts. The great classic handbook on the Etruscans, *Die Etrusker,* published by Karl Otfried Müller (1828) and significantly augmented by Wilhelm Deecke (1877), devoted Book 3 to a lengthy survey of Etruscan gods and spirits, the *Etrusca disciplina,* and the various branches of divination.

Following this product of German scholarship came the basic formulation of the various categories of the *disciplina* by the Swede Carl O. Thulin (1871–1921). His two essays on lightning (1905) and haruspicy (1906) and a third on the ritual books and the *haruspices* in Rome (1909) were gathered together as *Die Etruskische Disciplin* (Darmstadt, 1968). The works of Müller and Deecke and of Thulin are almost exclusively philological and historical and thus do not take into account the vast amount of archaeological material with bearing on the subject of Etruscan religion. Nor does either contain very much evidence derived from the study of the Etruscan language, which was still a pioneer discipline in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Nevertheless, Thulin did utilize the bronze liver found near Piacenza in 1877 (see Fig. II.2),[25] though his listings of the inscriptions were very rudimentary. Moreover, Deecke,

who was quite interested in the Etruscan language, drew upon the evidence of Etruscan mirrors, using the volumes of Gerhard's corpus of *Etruskiche Spiegel*,[26] a rich repository of representations of gods identifiable by their names labeled in Etruscan or else recognizable by their resemblance to Greek or Roman gods (e.g., see Figs. 11.8, 11, 16–19). Of great significance in this period for the study of original Etruscan texts was the recognition and publication (1892) of the astonishing linen book, an Etruscan ritual calendar, found reused as bandages for a mummy deposited in the National Museum of Zagreb (see Fig. 11.1).[27]

THE STUDY OF ETRUSCAN RELIGION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the twentieth century, development in the study of Etruscan religion was not linear, but some trends and certainly major developments may be detected. In 1984, Pallottino summed up the scholarship by listing the chief researchers on the topic: almost all of the literature was in German, Italian, or French.[28] A further and excellent guide to this literature was provided by the "nota bibliografica" of Mario Torelli, written for his chapter on Etruscan religion in the massive *summa* of Etruscan studies, *Rasenna* (1986).[29] Historians of religion may be noted, such as Carl Clemen, who wrote the first true monograph on this topic, *Die Religion der Etrusker* (Bonn 1936). A series of articles in *Studi e Materiali di Storia della Religione* (4, 1928 and 5, 1929) featured articles by a number of different experts on ancient religion (Clemen, H. J. Rose, C. C. Van Essen, H. M. R. Leopold, Franz Messerschmidt), including such topics as the relationship between Etruscan and Greek and Roman religion. Stefan Weinstock published a series of seminal articles, including his masterful study of the text of Martianus Capella and a basic study of the books on lightning,[30] based on his careful scrutiny of the texts and intimate knowledge of the comparative religious material from the Near East.

Missing from the bibliographies of Pallottino and Torelli but worth mentioning here is the study by the comparativist Georges Dumézil, originally published in French (1966) and then translated into English as "The Religion of the Etruscans," a lengthy appendix to his *Archaic Roman Religion*.[31] At the time, the book introduced a novel attitude toward the Etruscans, rather contemptuously removing them from forming background to Roman religion and placing them at the end of his study. Dumézil was eager to prove that Roman religion conformed to an Indo-European scheme and found the Etruscans inconvenient for his theory.[32] A useful contribution to the study of sources was the *Fonti di storia etrusca* compiled by Guilio Buonamici, translations of various basic Greek and Latin texts, with a fairly full section on religion.[33]

The greatest advances were being made by scholars who were strong philologists, especially those who were on the front lines in the study of the Etruscan language. Pallottino himself, Jacques Heurgon, and in particular Ambros J. Pfiffig brought to bear the ever-increasing scientific advances in the study of the language. In addition, they placed, for the first time, appropriate emphasis on the insertion of material culture into the dialogue.

The best general account in English to date, albeit brief, is that of Pallottino (1975, ch. 7). Likewise, his articles in the encyclopedic *Roman and European Mythologies*[34] are all basic authoritative accounts. Pfiffig's *Religio etrusca* (1975) remains the only lengthy, systematic exposition of Etruscan religion that takes into account Greek and Roman literary sources, the Etruscan language, and the archaeological evidence.[35] His bibliography was exhaustive (369 items).

The basic integrated methodology of Pallottino and Pfiffig has become standard today, and those who seek to be effective in the study of religion need global knowledge of the field of Etruscan studies. The latest generation of Italian scholars exemplifies well this ideal: Mario Torelli, Mauro Cristofani, Adriano Maggiani, Francesco Roncalli, and Giovanni Colonna. But the international character of Etruscan religious studies today was clearly evident in the conference organized in Paris in 1992 by Françoise Gaultier and Dominique Briquel, *Les Plus religieux des hommes: État de la recherche sur la religion étrusque* ("The Most Religious of Men: The State of Research on Etruscan Religion"), which included sessions on iconography, the pantheon, comparative religion, cults and rituals, and the relationship between Etruscan civilization and religion. The resulting publication (Paris, 1997) has a brief preface that sums up the "state of research." In combination with use of the most current archaeological discoveries, we see light shed on an increased chronological arc (the earliest periods of the Villanovan and Orientalizing phases are now clearer), and scholars are investigating the ties of the Etruscans with external cultures: Italic, Greek, and Oriental. For the rest, the reader may deduce the state of the field from the manifold articles; twenty-two scholars of international status published their latest insights there, all translated into French. Not one native speaker of English was on the program.

As of the year 2005 there still does not exist a substantial general account of the Etruscan religion in the English language. To fill this lacuna, the present volume of *The Reli-*

gion of the Etruscans was planned as a handbook, intended to be used as an introduction to the subject, but with sufficient scholarly apparatus to be of interest and use to more advanced students and scholars as well. The chapters of the book are based largely on papers given in 1999 at the Sixth Annual Langford Conference of the Department of Classics at Florida State University. Erika Simon, in her capacity as the Langford Family Eminent Scholar of Classics for the year 1999, selected the participants for the conference from leading scholars in the field of Etruscan studies. With coordinator Nancy de Grummond, Prof. Simon requested that the presenters give a general introduction to their individual subjects and include as well some of their own latest frontline research in the field. The participants fulfilled their assignments admirably and, after lively discussions and ideas for further additions to the book, proceeded to do a formal written version of their papers, taking into account the contributions of others.

The table of contents for *The Religion of the Etruscans* reveals the range of topics. The aim is to be systematic and comprehensive. The chapter by Larissa Bonfante lays out the most important surviving Etruscan inscriptions and explains how they are relevant for Etruscan religion, including points from her latest research relating inscriptions to religious iconography. The next chapter, by Nancy de Grummond, presents information on the sacred books of the Etruscan prophets and the activities of priests in divining the will of the gods; her work on Etruscan mirrors has brought up some new ideas about the Etruscan rituals of prophecy. Erika Simon discusses her concept of the "harmonious" pantheon of gods, pointing out how much cooperation and friendship there was among Etruscan deities and how versatile individual gods were, especially in regard to their ability to come and go from the Underworld to the upper sphere. Her chapter concludes with an alphabetical listing of the most significant Etruscan gods and brief characterizations of them.

Next, Ingrid Krauskopf gives a full survey of concepts of the Underworld and the intriguing demons inhabiting that part of the cosmos. Jean MacIntosh Turfa reviews the fascinating range of votive objects found in Etruscan sanctuaries and sacred areas, providing a most useful site-by-site summary of votive deposits of Etruria. Ingrid Edlund-Berry then discusses the delineation of space and boundaries in the cosmos, including some of her own original conclusions about the nature of Etruscan federal sanctuaries. The text concludes with a chapter on altars, shrines and temples, in which Giovanni Colonna provides a thorough overview and includes considerable detail about his own latest discoveries at Pyrgi and the nature of worship as revealed by offerings to the gods. His information about turf altars at Pyrgi, used in popular religion as opposed to the state patronage of grand temples, is integrated into the study of Etruscan religion for the first time here and provides a window on the ordinary, pious Etruscan people who sought to live in harmony with the gods. Every chapter has its own bibliography, so that the reader may follow up the scholarship on each particular topic.

We hope that the many illustrations for the book will provide an album of primary material. A parallel special feature of the work lies in the appendices of Greek and Latin texts, with English translations, that provide written primary source material for the study of Etruscan religion. Appendix C, a concordance of Etruscan inscriptions, helps the reader find all the references within the book that refer to a particular inscription. A glossary furnishes definitions of key terms.

NOTES

1. Pallottino 1975, 138.

2. Cicero provides a notable exception to this generalization, but he is to be classified with the philosophers. See below, p. 2.

3. Cicero, *Ad fam.* 6.5–9; Pliny, *HN* 2; Seneca, *QN* 2.3.9); Schofield 1986, 49 (quoting E. Rawson).

4. For a collection of Latin passages relevant to Tarquitius Priscus, see Thulin 1909, 22–29. There were other, later Tarquitii, from whom it is not always easy to distinguish the Late Republican figure.

5. For a full discussion of Vegoia, see below, pp. 30–31.

6. On Labeo, see Müller and Deecke 1877. For a full discussion of Tages, see below, pp. 27–30.

7. Pliny, *HN* 10.6.19, describes him as *haruspicum in nostro aevo peritissimus* ("the most skilled haruspex of our time").

8. Cicero, *De div.* 1.52.119; Suetonius, *Caesar* 81.

9. Johannes Lydus, *De ostentis,* 2.6.B, mentions as authors and translators Capito "the priest," Fonteius, and Apuleius Vicellius, but we know only the names. On the education of Romans in Etruria, cf. Heurgon 1964, 231, who argued that the literary tradition was scrambled in antiquity and that it was only young Etruscans who were sent to study the *Etrusca disciplina.* Valerius Maximus 1.1 (Appendix B, Source no. IV.9) states that Roman noble youths were thus educated, but passages in Cicero support Heurgon's idea: *De leg.* 2.21, *De div.* 1.92; Appendix B, Source no. IV.8. Cf. Livy 9.36.3, on the sending of Roman boys to Etruria to be educated.

10. Beard 1986; Schofield 1986.

11. Providing along the way some very worthwhile detail on the myth; told in full below, p. 27.

12. Perhaps augmented by a later commentator, the so-called Danielis; certainly drawing extensively on earlier authors, such as Aelius Donatus.

13. Festus also preserved many short observations in this area. See the collection of texts in Regell 1882.

14. *Martianus Capella* 1977; Ramelli 2001.

15. See van der Meer 1987 and the discussion by Bonfante below, pp. 10–11. For a detailed discussion of Martianus Capella, see de Grummond, forthcoming, ch. III, "Creation, Time and the Universe."

16. For the following section, see the account in de Grummond 1986.

17. For Annio, founders of the Etruscans included biblical figures along with Isis and Osiris, Ajax, Electra and Tyrrhenus, see de Grummond 1986, 28. See also N. T. de Grummond, "Annio da Viterbo," *EHCA* 1996, 1, 48–49.

18. C. Sowder, "Sir Thomas Dempster," in *EHCA* 1996, 1, 357–358.

19. N. de Grummond "Etruscheria," in *EHCA* 1996, 1, 410.

20. N. de Grummond, "Accademia Etrusca," in *EHCA* 1996, 1, 3–5.

21. For listings of books published in the early centuries of Etruscan studies, see esp. Barrocchi and Gallo 1985–1986, 195–196, and *Les Étrusques et l'Europe* 1992, 489–490.

22. Venuti's *Dissertazione sopra i tempietti degli antichi* was followed by a treatise on the temple of Janus in Rome (1740). See Barocchi and Gallo 1985, 154–156.

23. It is impossible to say if any Etruscans outside Rome had real knowledge of Greek philosophical systems. What is interesting about Lampredi's attempt is that he has used the basic texts critically and, in the end, describes an Etruscan cosmos not so different from that envisioned by Pallottino (1975, 140): the vague evidence "seems to point toward an original belief in some divine entity dominating the world through a number of varied, occasional manifestations which later became personified into gods."

24. F. Delpino, "L'âge du positivisme," *Les Étrusques et l'Europe,* 1992, 340–347; de Grummond 1986, 41–43. See also N. T. de Grummond, "Etruscan Tombs," in *EHCA* 1996, 1, 406–410; Pallottino 1975, 26–27.

25. On the liver, see his monograph, Thulin 1906.

26. *ES*; volumes 1 through 4 were issued by 1867. The fifth and final volume, edited by Klügmann and Körte, appeared in 1897.

27. Krall 1892; Roncalli 1985, 19.

28. Pallottino 1984, 323, lists C. Thulin, G. Herbig, R. Pettazzoni, C. Clemen, G. Furlani, C. C. Van Essen, H. M. R. Leopold, B. Nogara, G. Q. Giglioli, A. Grenier, R. Herbig, S. Weinstock, J. Heurgon, R. Bloch, and A. J. Pfiffig.

29. *Rasenna,* 159–237; bibliographical note, 234–237.

30. Weinstock 1932; Weinstock 1946.

31. Dumézil 1970, 625–696.

32. For a modern critique of Dumézil's theory, see Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 1, 14–16.

33. Buonamici 1939, 297–351.

34. Bonnefoy and Doniger 1992, 25–45; articles on Etruscan demonology, Etruscan and Italic divination, *Etrusca disciplina,* and other topics.

35. The recent book by J.-R. Jannot (1998) is much better illustrated than Pfiffig and constitutes a very useful album of pictures. Philologically, the book is insufficiently critical. At the time of this writing, an English translation of this work, *Religion in Ancient Etruria,* has been announced by the University of Wisconsin Press.

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CHAPTER II

ETRUSCAN INSCRIPTIONS AND ETRUSCAN RELIGION

Larissa Bonfante

We have no Etruscan literature, no epic poems, no religious or philosophical texts. We learn about Etruscan life and civilization—including language and religion, the two basic aspects of a people's identity—from the remains of their cities and cemeteries. These include highly important evidence from their inscriptions, written in their own peculiar language, that reveal much about their religious rituals and beliefs.

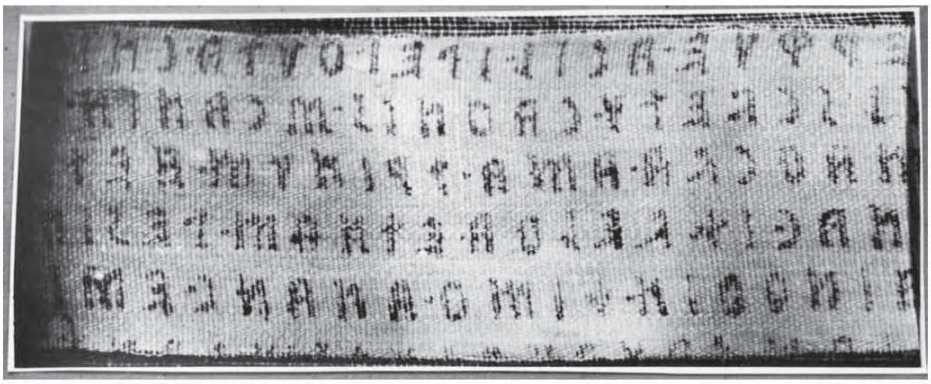
These inscriptions are so central to the study of Etruscan religion that they will naturally be referred to frequently throughout the book. In this chapter we present an overview of this source material, including a list of the most important inscriptions and a survey of some of the intriguing religious themes that have emerged in recent studies. We shall make frequent reference to the new standard collection of Etruscan inscriptions, Helmut Rix's *Etruskische Texte* (*ET*),[1] and include Rix's numbers for all inscriptions possible. By consulting the index of inscriptions in Appendix C, below, the reader can locate references to other discussions of particular inscriptions throughout the book.

Rix gives a revised count for the total number of Etruscan inscriptions that have come down to us. Taking into account duplicate publications of the same inscription, counting each coin legend once—and not counting the glosses, which give us Etruscan words explained in Latin or Greek texts but which are not inscriptions—the author comes to a total of fewer than 10,000 inscriptions (some 8,600, to be precise, though a good many more have been discovered in the years since *ET* appeared).[2] These range in date from the seventh to the first century BCE. There are some 75 inscriptions from the seventh century, a very respectable quantity, even when compared to the 500 or so Greek inscriptions of the Archaic period (from a far wider geographical area).[3]

Any boundaries we set between religious and nonreligious areas of Etruscan civilization are artificial at any time, but this is especially true in the early period. Giovanni Colonna has pointed out the sacral and aristocratic character of writing in the Orientalizing and Archaic periods.[4] Indeed, some of the earliest and most intriguing archaic inscriptions are found in rich tombs of southern Etruria. Many present the sequence of the Greek alphabet, evidently a sign of status, adopted from the Euboean Greeks of Pithekoussai.[5] This alphabet was in time adapted to the Etruscan language, with a few changes indicating geographical or chronological differences, and was then passed on to various peoples of Italy and Europe (such as the Latins, Umbrians, and Gauls).[6]

All the inscriptions can be read, and so they need not be "deciphered." Not all can be understood, however, partly because of the nature of the language, which is not Indo-European and is different from any known language, ancient and modern; and partly because of the nature of the evidence, which is fragmentary. Yet they reveal much about Etruscan religion. Four types of Etruscan inscriptions—ritual, legal, funerary, and votive—deal with religious rituals and the gods. Other inscriptions deal with myth, notably those on Etruscan mirrors, which illustrate stories of Greek and Etruscan mythological figures and which are, as Ambros Pfiffig called them, "picture bilinguals."[7]

Most of the nine thousand or so Etruscan inscriptions are brief, consisting of only a few words: they are epitaphs or dedications, recording the names of the deceased, the donor,



11.1. Zagreb mummy wrappings. 150–100 BCE. Zagreb, National Museum. (After Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, fig. 57.)

the god to whom the object is dedicated, or the mythological character depicted. The longer texts are technical, religious, and ritual, confirming the reputation of the Etruscans as being skillful in dealing with the gods, and related to the various books of the *Etrusca disciplina.** Many of these longer inscriptions have been the objects of recent studies.[8] Let us briefly survey them here and then follow with some of the more revealing short inscriptions.

THE LONGER INSCRIPTIONS

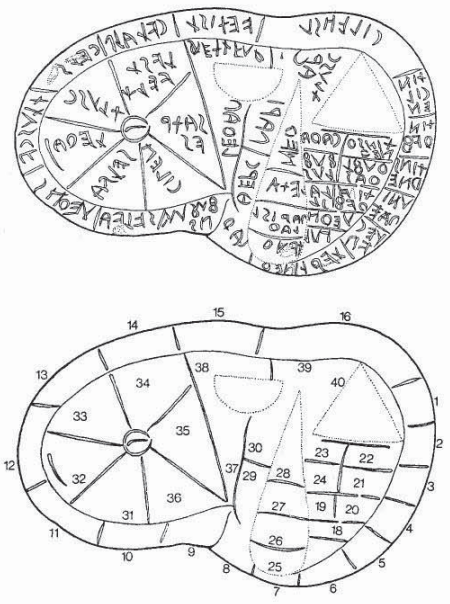
Zagreb Mummy Wrappings

The longest and most exotic Etruscan text that survives is not, properly speaking, an inscription. It is a religious text of the Hellenistic period, originally a sacred linen book, parts of which were preserved by being used as wrappings on an Egyptian mummy (*ET*, LL; Fig. 11.1).[9] The original book, which was cut up into bandages, is of a type referred to in Roman historical sources as a *liber linteus,* a linen book, often illustrated on Etruscan funerary statues as the attribute of a priest. In 1985 Francesco Roncalli had the wrappings restored—they were spotted and damaged by blood and the unguents used for mummification—and photographed in a specialized laboratory in Switzerland. Roncalli, having worked at the Vatican, was familiar with religious texts and was able to add new readings as well as to reconstruct the original form of the book by following the folds of the cloth and the red guidelines for the text. Rubrics in red ink (cinnabar) indicated how it was used as a liturgical text, like some modern Catholic missals. The neatly inked text, with some twelve hundred words laid out in twelve vertical columns, contains a liturgical calendar of sacrifices, offerings and prayers to be made on specific dates. A typical passage runs (col. VIII, line 9, Roncalli 1985, 40): *celi* (the month of September) *huθiś zaθrumiś* (the 26th [day]) *flerχva* (all the offerings) *neθunsl* (to the god Nethuns) *śucri* (should be declared) *θezric* (and should be made).

Piacenza Liver

Another very strange object also contains the names (abbreviated, but recognizable) of divinities who received cult. This is the life-sized bronze model of a sheep's liver from northern Italy, near Piacenza, made around 100 BCE (*ET*, Pa 4.2; Fig. 11.2).[10] It may have been used by a priest in the Roman army. (Other ritual inscriptions are from an earlier period.)

The model was clearly used as a device to teach (or remind) Etruscan priests of the divinatory practice of reading the entrails of animals. As Nancy de Grummond discusses below (Chap. III) priests or seers are shown using it in Etruscan art, including representations on several mirrors. According to the place where the liver of a sacrificed animal showed some special mark, the priest could guess the future or even bend it to his will. The Etruscans were particularly skilled in this *haruspicina,** or science of reading omens, and the Romans respected, hired, and imitated them. The sections of the liver correspond to the sections of the sky that were under the protection of each of the gods. There



11.2. Bronze model of a sheep's liver from Piacenza. Hellenistic period. Piacenza, Museo Civico. (After Rasenna, 211.)

was a mystic correlation between the parts of a sacred area, like the sky, and the surface of the liver of a ritually sacrificed animal. Such a correlation allowed those who had mastered the technique to "read," as it were, the god's writing in the sky.[11]

Each of the forty-two sections of the liver contains the names of one or more gods; there are fifty-one names, but several are mentioned two or three times. The sixteen sections in the margin of the upper (visceral) side correspond to the sixteen regions of the heavens, according to Martianus Capella (fifth century CE). Further, a number of names of divinities on the liver appear in the description of the skies by Martianus. (See Appendix B, Source no. III.4.)[12]

The lower (venal) side of the liver has two names: Usil, the name of the Sun god, and Tivr, the Moon.[13] A number of the names of these gods are familiar from various sources: Tin (Tinia), Uni, Hercle, Cath (Cautha/Kavtha), Usil, and Tivr. Others may represent epithets of gods. The placement of the different clusters of divinities indicates their function: so, for example, the right lobe contains the gods of heaven and lights (Tin, Uni, Cath, Fufluns); the god of water Nethuns (Neptune, whose name appears so frequently on the mummy wrappings); and Cilens, perhaps a god of Fate. Bouke van der Meer[14] finds that this constellation of divinities came together in the fourth century BCE and that about half of the approximately twenty-eight different names of gods inscribed on the liver are of Etruscan origin. The other half came into Etruria from the surrounding Italic world, Umbria, and the area of Rome (Uni, Neth, and other deities).

Terracotta Tile from Capua

The "Capua Tile," a large terracotta tile used as a tablet, found at Santa Maria di Capua and now in the Berlin Museum, records a religious calendar, like the Zagreb mummy wrappings or the Roman Fasti (*ET*, TC; Fig. 11.3). The nail holes have been taken to show that it was publicly exhibited in a sanctuary, but they can better be explained as holes for spikes to keep a series of similar documents stored or filed horizontally, the raised edges intended to protect the text incised on the inner surface.

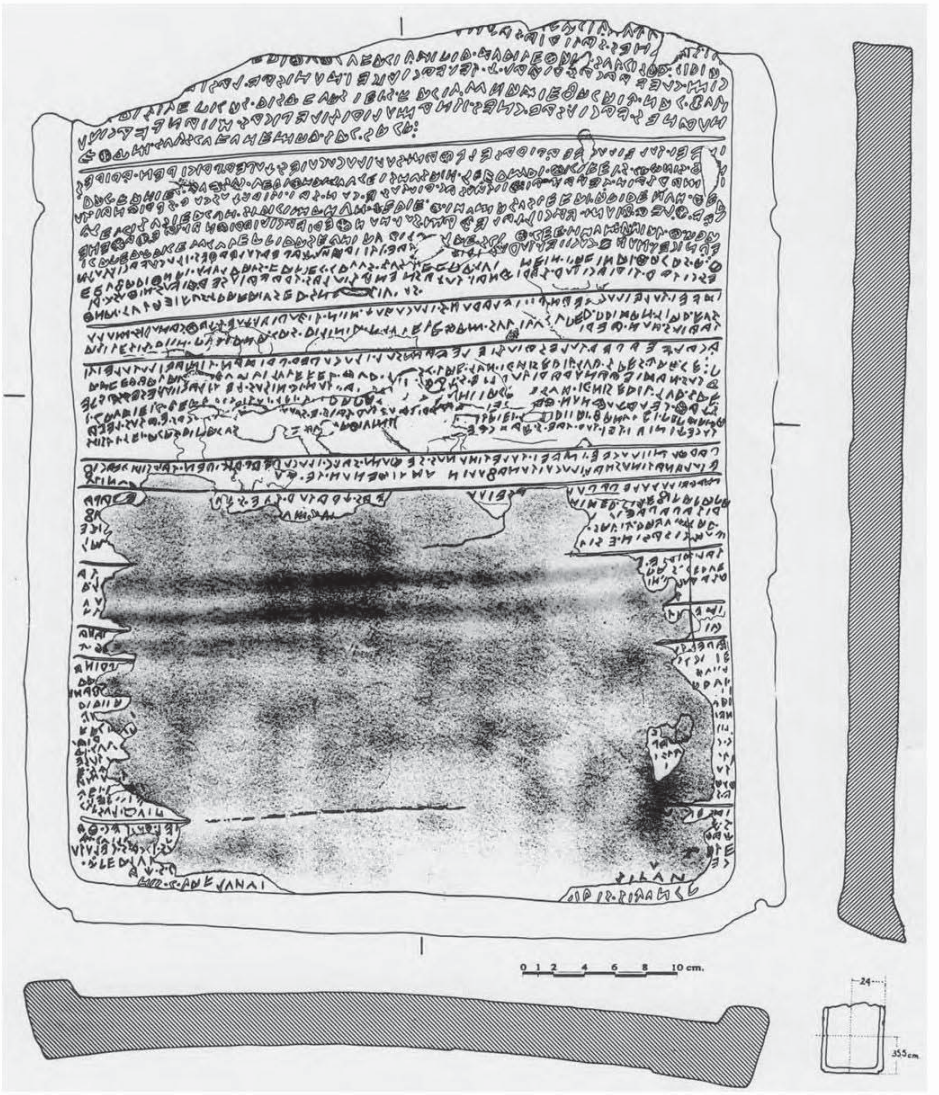
With sixty-two lines and almost three hundred legible words, this is the longest strictly epigraphical Etruscan inscription. Cristofani's study of 1995 dates it to the early fifth century (ca. 470 BCE). There were ten months, as in the earliest Roman calendar, in which the year began in March. Listed are offerings and sacrifices made to various divinities, including gods of the Underworld such as Letham (who appears on the Piacenza liver), Laran, Tin, and Thanr (who appears in birth scenes on Etruscan mirrors; see also Chap. 4), as well as to Uni, the mother goddess to whom the famous local cult was dedicated.[15]

Lead Strip from Santa Marinella

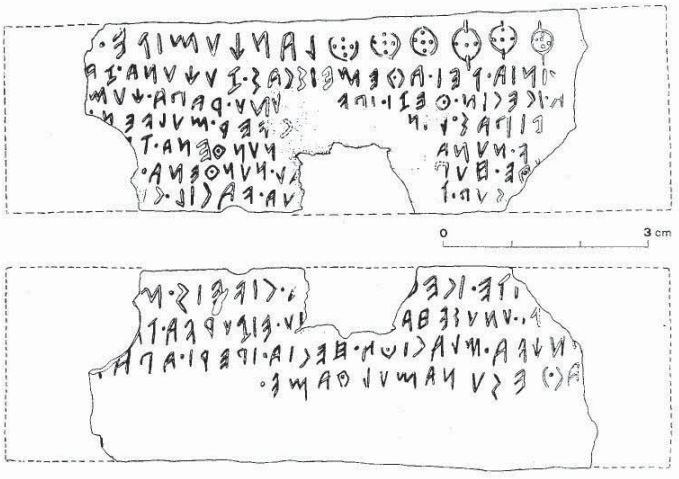
A text written on both sides of a strip of lead, found in fragments at Punta della Vipera near Santa Marinella on the sea, dates from around 500 BCE (*ET*, Cr 4.10; Fig. 11.4). Inscribed in a miniature style, it is incomplete but contains traces of at least eighty words. Little of the text can be understood, but we can read the word *cver,* "gift."[16]

Lead Plaque from Magliano

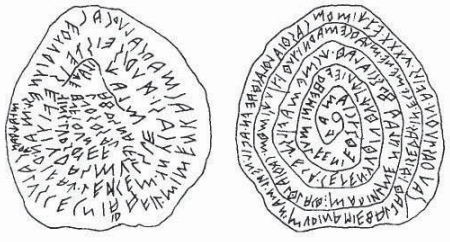
A small lead plate found at Magliano, probably dating from the fifth century BCE, has a strange spiral inscription on each side, running from the exterior margin inwards toward the center (Fig. 11.5). There are about seventy words (*ET*, AV 4.1). The word for "gods," *aiser,* which occurs here, in the Zagreb mummy wrappings, and elsewhere, seems to refer to a group



11.3. Terracotta tile from Capua. Ca. 500 BCE. Berlin, Staatliche Museen. (After Cristofani 1995, fig. 2.)



11.4. Lead plate from Santa Marinella (near Pyrgi). Fifth century BCE. Rome, Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia. (After Santuari d'Etruria, fig. 8.1C1.)



11.5. Lead tablet from Magliano, ca. 500 BCE. Florence, Archaeological Museum. (After Morandi 1982, 36.)

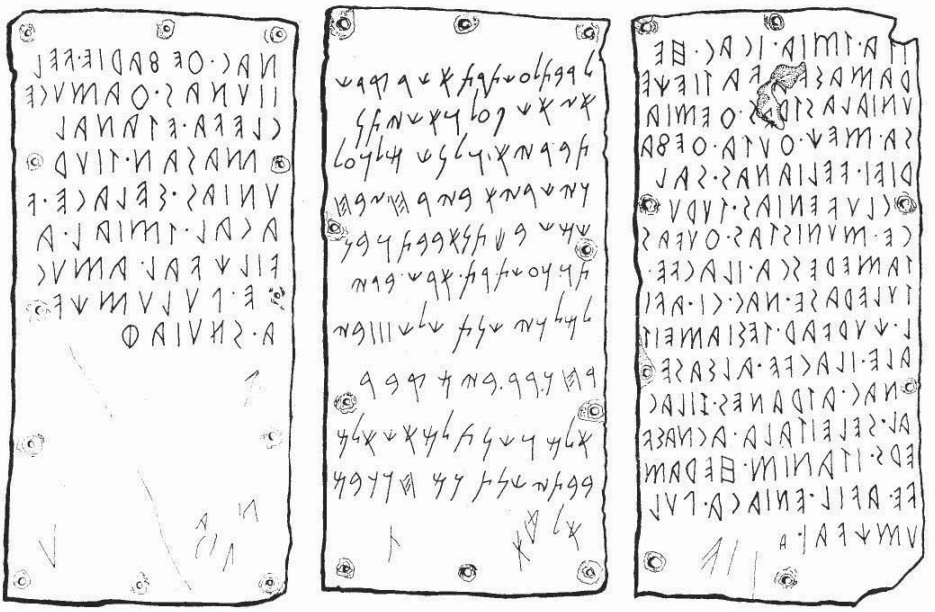
or "college" of gods, something like the *dii consentes, Penates,* or other collective divinities.[17]

Gold Tablets from Pyrgi

The three gold tablets, two written in Etruscan and one in Phoenician, found in 1964 at the sanctuary at Pyrgi, the harbor of Caere, record a dedication with important historical implications (*ET*, Cr 4.3–4.8; Fig. 11.6).[18] They date from around 500 BCE and constitute the nearest thing to the long-sought Etruscan bilingual. They record in both Etruscan and Phoenician a religious event: the dedication of a gift, perhaps a statue, by the king of Caere, in gratitude for the protection of the goddess. The identification of the goddess Astarte with Uni, rather than with Turan-Aphrodite, is particularly striking. Another tablet mentions Thesan. The longer Etruscan inscription has sixteen lines, thirty-six or thirty-seven words.

Sarcophagus of Laris Pulenas

Another long inscription is funerary: the *elogium* or epitaph of L(a)ris Pulenas (or Pulena) of Tarquinii, engraved on a scroll that the figure of the dead man holds in his hands (*ET*, Ta 1.17; Fig. 11.7).[19] The date is the Hellenistic period, third century BCE, and the text contains nine lines and fifty-nine words. The text can be in part interpreted by means of a comparison with the Latin *elogia* (honorary epitaphs) of the Scipios at Rome. Laris Pulenas was the great-grandson of Laris Pule, the Greek (*Creice;* the latter was possibly related to the famous Greek seer, Polles). Pulenas wrote a book on divination, like the scroll or *volumen* he is proudly exhibiting to the viewer. Like his great-grandfather, he devoted himself to religious duties, perhaps including the cult of ancestors. Recorded are the titles he held in his lifetime, most of them religious, including the priesthoods of Catha and Pacha, the latter equivalent to Fufluns or Dionysos (Pacha is Etruscan for Bacchus). Catha and Fufluns are connected elsewhere too in a joint worship. The name of Culśu can also be recognized.



11.6. Gold tablets from Pyrgi, the harbor of Caere. End of sixth century BCE. Copies in Rome, Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia. (After Morandi 1991, figs. 12–14.)

SOME SHORTER INSCRIPTIONS

Boundary Stones from Tunisia

Tin was a god who protected boundaries. His name appears as the guarantor on three boundary stones with identical inscriptions found in Tunisia, originally placed there by Etruscan colonists, perhaps in the time of the Gracchi: *m vnata zvtas tvl dardanivm tinś* Φ "M. Unata Zutas. Boundaries of the Dardanians. Of Tin. 1000 [paces]" (ET, Af 8.1–8.8).[20]

Bronze Mirror from Volaterrae

Clearly religious in character is an engraved bronze mirror from Volaterrae (ET, Vt S2; Fig. 11.8) whose inscription, a legal-religious document, has important implications. An imposingly regal, enthroned female figure, Uni, is pictured nursing a full-grown Hercle, while four gods stand by as witnesses. Among these are Apollo, recognizable by his laurel branch, and an older god holding a trident or lightning bolt, either Nethuns or Tinia. He points to a tablet on which the

11.7. Sarcophagus of Laris Pulenas. 250–200 BCE. Tarquinia, Museo Nazionale. (After Morandi 1991, fig. 20.)

11.8. Bronze mirror from Volaterrae with Hercle nursing at Uni's breast. 325–300 BCE. Florence, Museo Archeologico. (After ES, 5.60.)

significance of the scene is explained: *eca: sren: tva: iχnac hercle:unial clan: θra:sce,* "This picture shows how Hercle became Uni's son (or: drank milk)." This mother goddess, Uni, is carrying out an adoption ritual witnessed by four other gods. While Greek myth tells the story of the nursing of Herakles by Hera, his jealous stepmother, in the context of the conflict between the goddess and the hero, the story is not illustrated in the Greek art that has come down to us.[21] In Etruria, in contrast, there are a number of representations of this mythological nursing scene: as on this mirror, Uni is reconciled with Hercle by means of a ritual familiar from the Near East and Egypt but downplayed in Greece. It is in fact the Etruscan version that best illustrates for us the meaning of his name in Greek, "Glory of Hera."

Bronze Chimaera from Arezzo

The famed bronze Chimaera of Arezzo (Arretium), dating to the fourth century BCE, depicts the Greek monster with the body of a lion and, on its back, the head of a goat. The tail shaped like a serpent is a restoration. On the leg is incised an inscription dedicating it to the god, *tinścvil,* "gift to Tin" (*ET,* Ar 3.2; Fig. VI.1). This was indeed a splendid gift,

for the animal, which is life size, was evidently a part of a large group representing Bellerophon and Pegasus attacking the monster.[22]

Bronze Statuette of Culśanś

A bronze statuette of a double-faced divinity from Cortona is dedicated to Culśanś (*ET*, Co 3.4; Fig. 11.9): *v. cvinti. arntiaś. culśanśl alpan. turce,* "V[elia] Cuinti, Arnt's (daughter) to Culśanś (this object) gladly gave."[23]

Bronze Statuette Dedicated to Selvans Tularias

A bronze statuette of an athlete, from an unknown provenance (Fig. 11.10), has the following inscription: *ecn:turce: avle:havrnas:tuθina:apana: selvansl tularias,* "This gave Avle Havrnas [*tuthina apana,* meaning unknown] to Selvans of the Boundaries."[24]

Bronze Mirror from Praeneste

Not only are inscriptions in Etruscan useful. From Praeneste comes a mirror with Latin inscriptions, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, dated ca. 300 BCE (Fig. 11.11),[25] that presents an Italic view of the relationship between Uni and Hercle. It shows *Iovei* (i.e., Jupiter, in the dative case), reconciling *Iuno* and *Hercele.* A female herm and a phallus put the picture in a sexual context that may be religious, though it is hard for us to interpret.

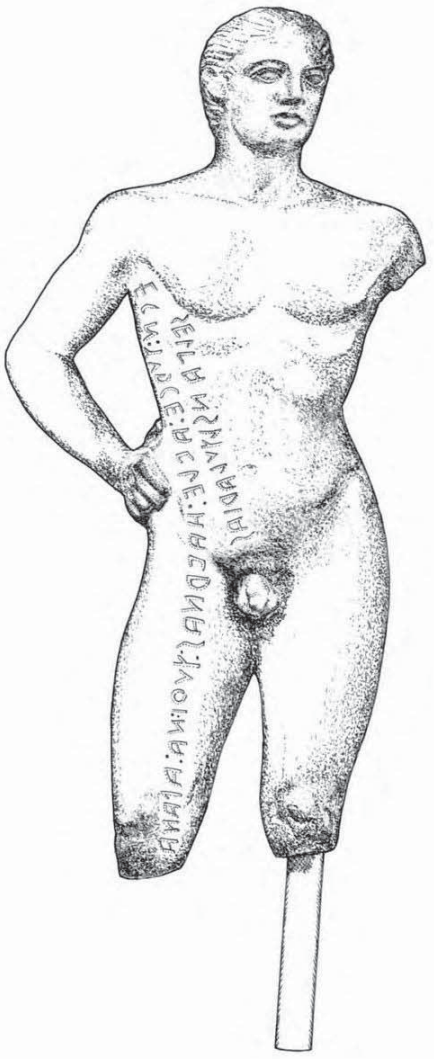
Rectangular Boundary Stone from Perugia

The protection of boundaries, *tular,** was an important divine responsibility. It was mentioned in the text of the prophecy of Vegoia (Appendix B, Source no. 11.1) and serves as the epithet of the god Selvans in a votive inscription. It also occurs in the sharply chiseled inscription (forty-six lines and 130 words) on two of the four faces of a boundary stone (*cippus**) from Perugia, dating from the second or first century BCE (*ET*, Pe 8.4; Fig. 11.12).[26] The inscription does not name any gods and would not be overtly religious according to our modern definition of the word. But Roncalli suggests that the two holes on the top were made for *cippi,* perhaps aniconic images of Silvanus-Terminus, and that there were two of them in relation to the two families, the Velthina and the Afuna, whose boundaries they protected.[27]

Bronze Tablet from Cortona

The context may be similar for a remarkable recent find, the *Tabula Cortonensis,* which takes its place, at sixty words, as one of the longest Etruscan inscriptions to have come down to us (Fig. 11.13).[28] The bronze tablet, of Hellenistic date, came to light in 1992 in Cortona but was publicly announced only in June 1999, causing a flurry of excitement in newspapers and on Italian television. It records a legal contract or religious ritual, including a long list of the names of the

11.9. Bronze statuette of Culśanś. Third century BCE. Cortona, Museum. (After A. Pfiffig, Religio etrusca, *Graz, 1975, fig. 108.)*



11.10. Bronze statuette dedicated to Selvans Tularias. End of fourth century BCE. Malibu, CA. The J. Paul Getty Museum. (After Bonfante 1991, 836, fig. 1.)

11.11. Praenestine mirror with Juno, Jupiter, and Hercules. Ca. 300 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (After CSE USA 3.7.)

parties involved and another list of the witnesses' names. No gods seem to be mentioned, but the fact that it was folded over into eight pieces, apparently in a ritual destruction, suggests that the content was religious.

Dedications to Hercle

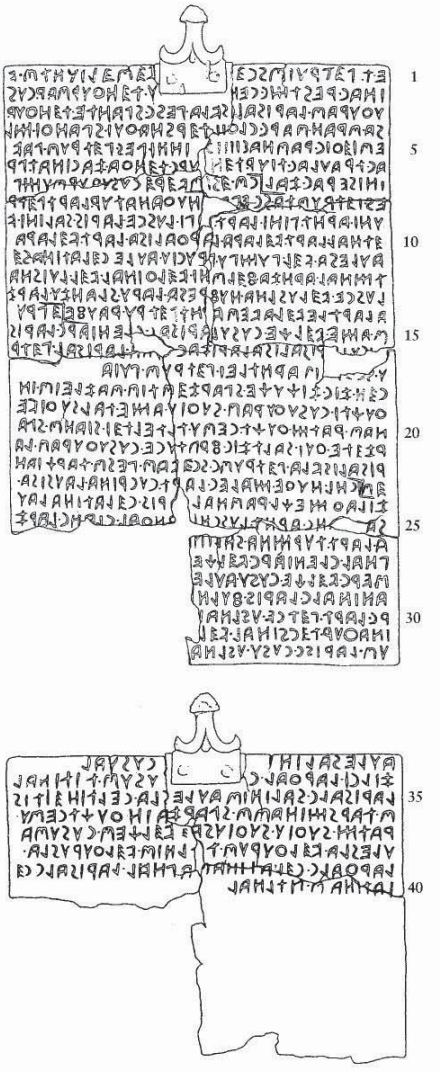
Several inscriptions came to light in the late 1970s and early 1980s to a cult in honor of Hercle. A votive inscription on a bronze base in the Manchester Museum (Fig. 11.14), incompletely preserved, tells us that a certain Prisnius gave it to Hercle on behalf of his son, . . . *esi p.ri.snius turce hercles clen ceχa munis en ca eluruve itruta: ala alpnina luθs inpa ulχn. . . . Luθs* may also be the name of a god, and *ala alpnina* may be compared to *alpan turce*, "gladly gave" (Latin: *libens dedit*).[29] A sanctuary at Caere seems to account for a number of inscriptions to Hercle. A large bronze club, a bronze statuette of Hercle in Toledo (Fig. 11.15), a bronze weight, and a red-

11.12. Rectangular boundary stone from Perugia. Third or second century BCE. Perugia, Museo Archeologico. (Photo: Schwanke, DAI Rome 82.1151.)

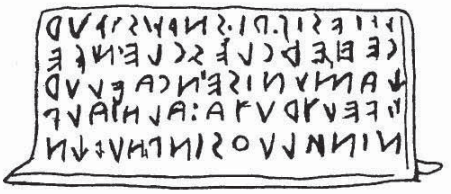
figured Attic cup by Euphronios (returned to Rome in 1999 by the J. P. Getty Museum) all have inscriptions that testify to an important cult place for Hercle.[30]

Dedications to Other Deities

Inscribed dedications at the sanctuary of Graviscae, the port of Tarquinii, point to the worship of Turan, Uni, Vei, Atunis (Adonis), and Aplu.[31] A group of bronze statues and statuettes with votive inscriptions also provide the names of gods to whom cult is paid. The inscriptions are incised on the



11.13. Bronze tablet from Cortona, Tabula Cortonensis. *Third or second century BCE. Florence, Museo Archeologico. (After Agostiniani and Nicosia 2000, pls. 8–9.)*



11.14. Bronze base dedicated to Hercle. Hellenistic period. Manchester Museum. (After Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, fig. 52.)

bodies of these figures, illustrating the continuity of an archaic custom that was usual in early Greek inscriptions but that in Greece was abandoned in favor of writing the names on a separate base, in order, no doubt, to avoid defacing the image.[32] This is one of the many cases in which the Etruscans maintain archaic customs, not a surprising tendency given the aristocratic character of their society.

RECURRING THEMES

Etruscan mirrors and wall paintings constitute a rich repertoire of Etruscan mythological scenes. Often the labels on the figures give us an insight into points of view of images, themes, and motifs that are either strictly Etruscan or differ in significant ways from Greek religious and mythological iconography. The following appear to be characteristically Etruscan: (1) the prevalence of couples and "dyads," (2) the importance of mothers, (3) representations of scenes of the birth of gods, with related midwives and other medical subject matter, and (4) the frequent appearance of souls or ghosts. Let us now consider each of these themes at greater length.

The Prevalence of Couples and "Dyads"

As regards gods in groups, we have already noted the implications of the word *aiser.* The tendency to put gods in pairs or dyads is also deduced through inscriptions. Besides Fufluns and Catha, couples include Turan and Atunis, often representing Turan as an older woman with Atunis as a boy or very young man; Aita (Hades) and Phersipnei (Persephone or Proserpina); Atmite (Admetus) and Alsctei (Alkestis). Some couples turn out to be mother-and-son groups like Semla and Fufluns. Other "dyads," as Pallottino calls them, are twins like the Dioskouroi, *tinas cliniiar,* Castor and Pollux.[33]

11.15. Bronze statuette of Hercle. Ca 300 BCE. Toledo Museum of Art. (Acc. 78.22, gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. Courtesy of Toledo Museum of Art.)

The Importance of Mothers

The importance of mothers is shown by the frequent epithets of goddesses who are called *ati,* "mother," such as *cel ati,* "mother earth" (Celsclan= son of Cel), *turan ati,* "mother Turan." These parallel the early and frequent artistic representations of mothers and children, many of them nursing—an image that was shunned in Greek art until the fourth century BCE.[34]

A good example of a mother is the third-century votive stone statue from Volaterrae known as the *kourotrophos** Maffei. This life-sized marble statue of a standing woman holding a baby might be thought to be a cult statue, except for the votive inscription that runs along the figure's right arm and shoulder (ET, Vt 3.3). Though the statue is based on a Greek fourth-century model, the baby is a peculiarly Etruscan addition. The inscription gives us the word for "image," *cana.*[35] It reads *mi: cana: larθiaś: zanl: velχinei: śe[lv]anśl[: tu]rce,* "I (am) the image of Larthia Zan. Velchina [to Selvans?] gave (me)."

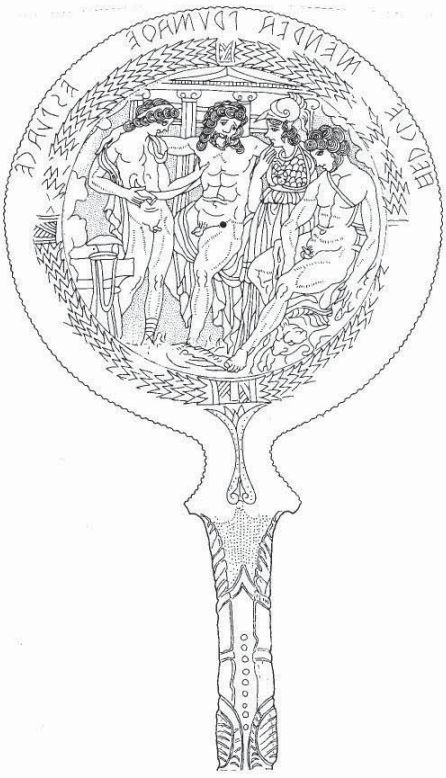
The Birth of Gods

As for the birth of gods, not only is the subject favored in Etruscan art but there are surprising twists and additions to the stories. The birth of Fufluns (Dionysos, Bacchus) has a precedent: a scene shows the conception of the god by Tinia and Semla.[36] Thalna, who appears on a number of mirrors of birth scenes together with Thanr, or Ethausva, as a divine midwife, also appears as a male, illustrating the ambiguity of the sex of certain divine figures and a different attitude towards their anthropomorphism.[37]

Such a practical view of myths is typically Etruscan. Artists show the birth of Menerva (Athena), a scene that takes on special emphasis in Etruscan art because of her importance, with divine "nurses"—Thalna, Thanr—realistically assisting Tinia. Other medical scenes include Prumathe (Prometheus), at the moment of his liberation, who is assisted by Esplace (Asclepius), in what looks to us like a similarly realistic approach (Fig. 11.16).[38]

The Frequent Appearance of Souls or Ghosts

Ingrid Krauskopf discusses (below, Chap. 5) evidence of the importance of the afterworld in Etruscan religion. Around the area of the ancient Volsinii (modern Orvieto) we find the custom of dedicating an object to the dead, especially a precious object, by scratching on it the word *suθina,* "for the grave." In the case of a mirror, scratching the word across the reflecting surface makes it useless for the living. One mirror at the Metropolitan Museum of Art has *suθina* on the disc,



11.16. Bronze mirror with Prometheus Unbound. Early third century BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (After CSE USA 3.11.)

while another has the word *cracna* in the same position; perhaps it is the name of the deceased. The custom of "killing" the object to make it unfit for use by the living is known from other cultures, and indeed elsewhere in Etruria as well. It belongs in the context of the world of the dead and of ghosts.[39]

In fact, we have several depictions of ghosts, which can be identified because they are clearly labeled with one of the words we know best in Etruscan: *hinθial,* which means "soul" or "image." There is *hinθial teriasals* (ET, Ta 7.67), "the ghost of Teiresias," and a vase painting shows the ghosts of two Amazons, *pentasila* and *aturmuca* (ET, Vc 7.36), Penthesilea and Andromache.[40] A mirror in the Metropolitan Museum with Odysseus and Kirke (Fig. 11.17) shows a thin, wan

11.17. Bronze mirror with Uthste, Cerca, and Velparun. 350–300 BCE. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. (After CSE USA 3.15.)

11.18. Bronze mirror with Lasa, Hamphiar, and Aivas. 350–300 BCE. London, British Museum. (After CSE Great Britain 1, I, 28.)

figure of Velparun, that is, Elpenor, whose ghost comes up to Odysseus (Uthste) in the Underworld scene in the *Odyssey:* the ghost is present along with Cerca (Kirke) as two scenes from the epic are merged in the same picture.[41]

Legends on Etruscan coins provide source material for the religious, as well as the political and commercial life of the Etruscan cities. The coins of Populonia show the Etruscan name of the city, Pupluna—that is, Fufluna, "the city of Fufluns."[42]

CONCLUSION: THE PLACE OF WRITING IN ETRUSCAN RELIGION

Because writing was so important for the Etruscans, our knowledge of Etruscan religion depends to a large extent on Etruscan inscriptions and their contexts. There is still much to learn from these texts—ritual and funerary, votive, legal, and mythological, as recent studies have shown: the names of the gods and their contexts—whether they are mythological figures from Greek or Etruscan traditions or gods who receive cult in local sanctuaries. Sometimes, as in the case of Hercle, they are clearly both. We learn the names of the donors, the ritual formulas, and forms of votive gifts and of funerary dedications.

Writing defined and fixed the established channels of communication between gods and mortals. In a way, the signs of the gods were themselves a kind of writing that had to be deciphered by men.[43] After the 1985 exhibit on Etruscan texts at Perugia, *Scrivere Etrusco,* Massimo Pallottino remarked that we could well call the Etruscans, like the Hebrews, the "People of the Book." When Livy tells us that the Romans used to send their children to Etruria to learn letters in the fourth century BCE, as they later used to send them to Athens, we can assume that it was the children of aristocrats, the Roman oligarchy, who needed to learn the art of divination as part of their training, to be able to lead armies in the field and carry out religious rituals in peace. With the study of the Etruscan books of divination they received a technical training that might have been the ancient equivalent of going to MIT to study engineering.

11.19. Bronze mirror with Athrpa, Turan, Atunis, Meliacr, and Atlenta. Ca. 320 BCE Berlin, Antiquarium. (After G. Zimmer, Spiegel in Antikenmuseum, *Berlin, 1987, pl. 19.)*

There were characteristic styles for religious texts, some of which we can recognize in spite of the loss of Etruscan literature and the paucity of long, continuous texts. The solemnity of the style occasionally comes through even in the limited amount of written material that has come down to us. In Etruscan art, moreover, a number of the longer texts echo the solemn rhythm characteristic of religious and legal documents, with their repeated symmetries, parallel clauses, and synonyms. When Laris Pulenas lists his titles and priesthoods, recording the ceremonies, sacraments, functions, and

sacrifices at which he has officiated, their ritual order seems to determine the rhythm of the repeated *pul, pul, pul*—"first, then, then. . . ." In the Pyrgi tablets a similar rhythm appears from the beginning: *ita tmia icac heramasva,* "This is the *tmia* and this is the *heramasva* . . . ," and later, *ilacve . . . ilacve,* "since on the one hand . . . since on the other hand." In calendars such as those on the Zagreb mummy wrappings or the Capua tile, which prescribe specific sacrifices, libations, and prayers to be offered to particular divinities at given dates, the repetitions are necessitated by their very nature. On the Perugia boundary stone, the patterns, symmetries, and other rhetorical devices of ritual language are reflected in the spacing of the words and lines of the inscription.[44]

Written texts—books, scrolls, and tablets—are frequently represented in Etruscan art, and the solemnity of the written style of religious and legal texts is also sometimes represented on the monuments themselves. One of the best examples of such a visual rendering of a document recording the ceremony is the mirror from Volaterrae with the symbolic ritual of the adoption of Hercle on the part of Uni (Fig. 11.8). This solemn moment is witnessed by an assembly of divinities, one of whom points to the tablet that records the ceremony and assures its legality, like the contracts and legal documents recorded on the Perugia *cippus* and *Tabula Cortonensis* (Figs. 11.12 and 11.13). This documentation of a divine rite of passage is paralleled by funerary scenes such as that of the Lasa holding out a scroll with the names of the dead heroes (Fig. 11.18), or of Laris Pulenas exhibiting his scroll on his sarcophagus (Fig. 11.7). An image similarly assuring the permanence of the destiny of an individual or a group may be the ritual gesture of the female divinity Athrpa (Atropos) hammering the nail of Fate on another mirror, as the two unfortunate couples, Turan and Atunis, Meliacr and Atlenta (Meleager and Atalanta), look on (Fig. 11.19).[45]

The importance of the written word is underlined by the appearance of the word for "writing," *ziχ,* on religious and legal documents. On the Capua tile, an individual whose name is lost has been responsible for the text, which he wrote down or ordered to be written, *ziχunce.* The Zagreb mummy wrappings have *ziχne,* as well as the phrase *ziχri cn,* "Let this be written down."[46] The epitaph of Laris Pulenas refers to the book on divination he has written, the *ziχ neθśrac.* The *cippus* from Perugia ends with the solemn ruling, *ceχa ziχuχe,* "as this sentence has been written down, prescribed"—the sentence has been written in stone. In the bronze tablet from Cortona, the *Tabula Cortonensis,* the verb *ziχ-* also refers to the contents of the document.

The luxurious writing implements buried with the dead indicated the importance of writing in the seventh century, an importance emphasized in the fourth century and later by specific references to books and writing in the documents themselves and by their representation in art. Religion, the art of divination, the stability of boundaries, the security of the society all depended upon the inviolability of the written word. Prophecies, which were crucial to the Etruscan system of religion and life, were often spoken, or otherwise indicated. Many were written down, like the prophecies of Tages and of Vegoia.[47] The act of writing itself was important and defined the character of rituals or sacred law and the very nature of the religion concerned.[48] Etruscan religion provides a striking example of the symbolic, religious significance of writing.

NOTES

1. Rix, in *ET.*

2. Further, Rix (*ET*) omits "graffiti," the *sigla* of one, two or three letters that abound on pottery and other objects from Etruscan archaeological sites but are usually discounted by philologists because they do not have recognizable words. Cf. de Grummond, Bare and Meilleur 2000.

3. Cristofani 1987, 127–131; Cornell 1991, 21. Greek inscriptions: Guarducci 1987, 34–87.

4. Colonna 1976, 7–24, esp. 18–22.

5. Cristofani 1979, 378–379.

6. Morandi 1982.

7. Pfiffig 1969, 12; Fiesel 1928; De Simone 1968–1970; Rix 1978–1984, 84.

8. Roncalli 1985; Rix 1985, 21–37; Christofani 1995.

9. Roncalli 1985, 17–64.

10. Van der Meer 1987; Maggiani 1982.

11. This was the case when the Etruscan princess Tanaquil, wife of Tarquin, read the signs of the bird's flight in different regions of the sky when they arrived in Rome and foresaw their future there. Indeed, her husband did become king and began the Etruscan dynasty at Rome as Tarquinius Priscus. For further discussions of the sky and its divisions, see the discussion by Ingrid Edlund-Berry below, Chap. 7.

12. Van der Meer 1987, 22–26; Weinstock 1946.

13. For the deities mentioned here and throughout this volume, the reader may refer to the fuller treatment by Simon in Chapter 4. See especially the glossary of gods (pp. 57–61) and Chart 1 (p. 46), which gives a list of selected Etruscan gods with conjectured identi-

fications of the counterparts in Greece and Rome. As noted earlier, Etruscan spellings were not standardized, and so minor variations in the names may appear, depending on which inscriptions are referenced. Here we try to observe the versions of the names used on the liver, some of which, however, are surely abbreviations.

14. Van der Meer 1987, 146.

15. Thanr: Cristofani 1995, 70, 119; Uni, *unialθi:* 118–119.

16. *Santuari d'Etruria* 153–154. *Cver:* Pfiffig 1969, 264–267, 284, "votive gift," or "boy" ("Geschenk," "Weihegabe," or "Knabe").

17. Pallottino 1975, 143.

18. Pyrgi tablets: CIE 6314–6316. Pallottino 1975, 170, with previous bibliography; *Die Göttin von Pyrgi*, 1981.

19. CIE 5430. Devoto 1936, 287; Heurgon 1957, 106–126; Heurgon 1961, 291–293; Pallottino 1984, 425, 441; Van der Meer 1987, 129–130, 172–173, 187, fig. 78; Morandi 1991, 156–167, no. 15, fig. 20 (drawing); Cataldi 1988: Beekes and van der Meer 1991, 57–59.

20. Heurgon 1969, 526–551; Carruba 1976, 163–173.

21. For mothers and children in ancient art, see Bonfante 1989, 85–106; Bonfante 1997b, 174–196. See also van der Meer 1995, 124–130. For reference to a statue of Juno nursing Hercules, see *Anthologia Palatina* 9.589.

22. Cristofani 1991a, 2–5. For such a group illustrated on a mirror in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, see Bonfante 1997a, 13.

23. Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 166, source 48, fig. 32.

24. For the Roman equivalent, Silvanus *custos,* see Dorcey 1992, esp. 17–25, 28–32, 179. See also Collins Clinton, forthcoming. The epithet *custos* appears only in Rome and Italy.

25. Bonfante 1997a, no. 7.

26. De Simone 1987–1988, 346–351; Fabing 1988, 254–258; Van der Meer 1987, 61; Bonfante 1991, 835–844; Cristofani 1991b, 148, no. 36.

27. Roncalli 1985, 74–81.

28. Agostiniani and Nicosia 2000.

29. Manchester base: Turfa 1982, 183; Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 175, source 61; Pallottino 1983, 611–614; Colonna 1987–1988, 345; ET, OA 3.9 (wrongly reads *luθs* as *lusθ*). On the cult of Hercle at Cerveteri, see Cristofani 1996, 39–54.

30. For the bronze statuette of Hercle in Toledo, *hercales mi:* de Grummond 1986, 20–21, fig. I-1; Cristofani 1996, 54. For the bronze club of Heracles with votive inscription to Hercle, from Cerveteri, see Cristofani 1996, 54, fig. 29, and 55–60; Moretti Sgubini 1999, 1–24. For votive inscriptions, see Schrimer 1998, 38–56. For Hercle in Etruscan art, see Bayet 1926; Uehlenbrock 1986; Schwarz 1990; Neils 1998, 6–21.

31. Torelli 1977, 398–458.

32. Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, sources 46–50. Early Greek inscriptions on statues: Guarducci, 1987, 46–48, nude bronze male figure, Mantiklos Apollo, ca. 700 BCE, Boston Museum of Fine Arts; 49–51, marble statue of *kore** from Delos, Nikandre, ca. 650 BCE.

33. Pallottino 1975, 143; De Puma, 1973, 159–170; de Grummond 1991. Pallottino includes couples made up of "a male god and an accompanying goddess, as in the case of Aita and Phersipnai, the infernal couple." I feel male-female couples are different in kind and in any case unequal: Bonfante 1981, 157–187 (= *Reflections,* 323–343).

34. Colonna 1976–1977, 45–62; Colonna 1994, 134–135; Bonfante 1997b, 174–196; de Grummond 2004; Renard 1964.

35. CIE 76; Bianchi Bandinelli 1982, 288–314.

36. Van der Meer 1995, 119–122 (Menerva), 122–124 (Fufluns); Bonfante 1993, 221–235.

37. Bonfante 1997a, no. 20; Cristofani 1993, 9–21.

38. Bonfante 1997a, no. 11; Dobrowolski 1991, 1213–1230; Kerenyi 1963, 127–128. Kerenyi points to the remarkable resemblance of the image of Prometheus to that of a Renaissance Christ taken down from the Cross.

39. Bonfante 1997a, no. 4. On *suθina,* see Fontaine 1995, 201–216; Briquel 1995.

40. Martelli 1987, no. 174B.

41. Bonfante 1997a, no. 15. See also Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 22.

42. Tripp 1986, 203–204.

43. Much of the following is adapted from a section, "The Written Word," in Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 114–116.

44. De Simone 1997, 235–237; ET; Cristofani 1995, 85–87, 125. On the Perugia *cippus,* see Roncalli 1985, 81; and Roncalli 1985b, 161–170. The *Tabula Cortonensis* gives us a new example of the verb "to write."

45. On the importance of writing in Etruscan art and society, see Roncalli 1985a; Roncalli 1976, 187–195. On the nail of Fate, see Aigner Foresti 1979, 144–149; Bonfante 1998, 53–65.

46. New reading: Roncalli 1985, 52 (instead of *zaχri,* in *ThLE*, s.v., TLE, 1).

47. De Grummond, below, Chap. 3.

48. Beard 1991, 35–58: "The simple fact, for example, that writing becomes used, even by a tiny minority, to define the calendar of rituals or sacred law inevitably changes the nature of the religion concerned"; and also her discussion of the primacy of writing and the "clear determining power of the written word over the spoken" (39). See also Corbier 1987, 27–60; Corbier 1991, 99–118.

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CHAPTER III

PROPHETS AND PRIESTS

Nancy Thomson de Grummond

For an Etruscan, the starting point of religion lay in the revelations of the prophets. After that, the continuing practice of religion was guided by inquiry into the will of the gods, properly revealed and interpreted by individuals with skills in divination. Here we shall make a distinction between these two different categories of communication of the will of the gods, using the words "prophet" and "prophecy" to refer to the traditions in which a particular individual made revelations that then became basic sacred scripture for the Etruscans. We will reserve the term "divination" for the multitude of examples in which a priest or other individual interpreted a message from the gods by consulting the previously revealed body of divine knowledge known as the *Etrusca disciplina.*[*1]

PROPHETS

We shall consider numerous references in Greek and Latin sources[2] to the utterances of Etruscan prophets, but unfortunately we do not have original Etruscan sources on this topic. As we consider these literary sources, we shall also look at evidence from the archaeological record that may help to confirm or expand ideas in the texts.

Tages

The central myth of Etruscan prophecy lies in the story of Tages, the wise child who sprang up from the freshly plowed earth and revealed in full the rules of the *Etrusca disciplina.* The form of the name "Tages" is Latin, employing the letter *g,* not used by the Etruscans. We may imagine that the prophet's name in Etruscan incorporated a hard *c* sound, a point to which we shall return. The most important sources for the myth are Cicero, ca. 44 BCE (*De div.* 2.23; Appendix B, Source no. II.3); Johannes Lydus, sixth century CE (*De ostentis* 2.6.B; Appendix B, Source no. II.5) and Verrius Flaccus (epitomized by Festus, second century CE, *De significatu verborum* 359.14, Lindsay, p. 492, v.6; Appendix B, Source no. II.2). These are a mixed lot, but all seem to have had access to antiquarian sources that may reflect original Etruscan writings. A number of other sources also make limited reference to the story.

Flaccus related that Tages was the son of Genius and grandson of Jupiter (i.e., the Roman equivalent of the Etruscan god Tinia). According to both Cicero and Lydus, Tages imparted his knowledge when a plowman cut a furrow in the ground and the child sprang up and started singing; Tages was like a newborn but had characteristics that evoked the wisdom of an old man. Cicero says the event took place at Tarquinii and was promptly attended by "all Etruria." Lydus tells us specifically that the plowman was none other than Tarchon, founder of the city. Flaccus noted that the child was responsible for teaching his message to the *duodecim populi,* the Twelve Peoples of Etruria. In Lydus' version, Tarchon took the child away and set him "in sacred places" to learn from him. A recurrent feature in the sources is that the teachings were written down and that the leaders or *lucumones** of Etruria were conduits for the transmission of the prophecy.

What were the teachings of Tages? Cicero says that they pertained to *haruspicina,* that is, the interpretation of the will of the gods through scrutiny of the inner organs of a sacrificed animal; elsewhere (*De div.* 2.38), Cicero says simply that the teachings pertained to the *disciplina* of the Etruscans. Other sources mention lightning and entrails (Arnobius, *Adv. nat.* 2.69); city foundations made with the plow (Macrobius, *Sat.* 5.19.13; Appendix B, Source no. IV.5); earthquakes (Lydus, *De ostentis* 54c); the spheres of habitation of the gods (Lactantius, *Comm. in Stat. Theb.* 4.516); and a remedy for mildew, i.e., agricultural lore (Columella, *De re*

III.1. *Channel of the "shrine/altar" emptying into the cavity in the bedrock, Building Beta, Pian di Civita, Tarquinii. (After Moretti Sgubini 2001, fig. 35.)*

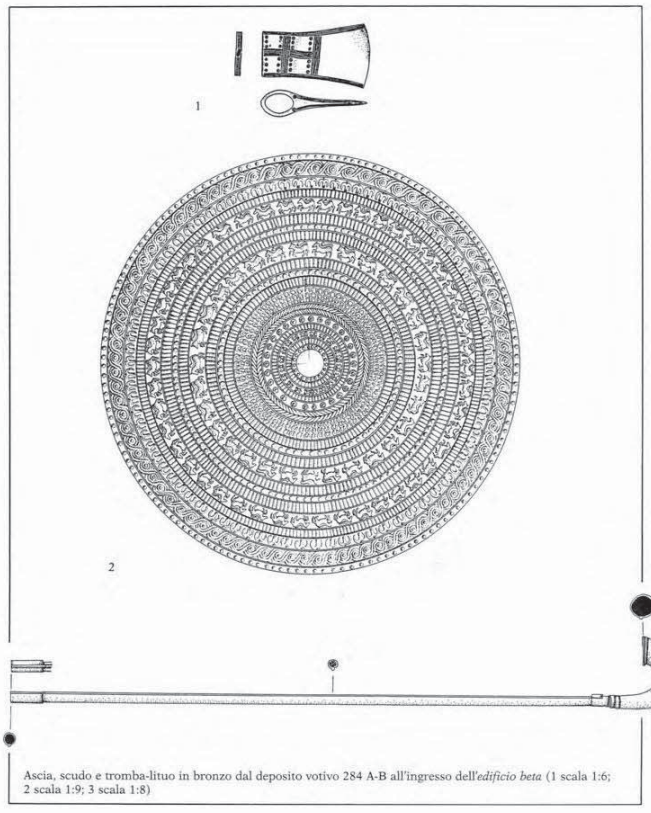
rustica 10.5, 337–347; Appendix B, Source no. IV.4). The writings derived from the revelation were sometimes referred to as *Libri Tagetici,* and these were described as containing *Libri haruspicini* and *Libri Acherontici* (on rituals pertaining to salvation and the Afterlife).

From archaeology we glean other evidence relative to the mythical child prophet. Excavations by the University of Milan at Pian di Civita, the city site of ancient Tarquinii, from 1982 to 1985 produced a quite remarkable find in an area identified by the excavators as sacred.[3] They discovered the skeleton of a child, 7–8 years old, buried around the end of the ninth century BCE by inhumation, a rite quite unusual at that time. The child, wearing a pendant or bulla around its neck, revealed a deformation of the bones that experts have associated with epilepsy. Near the body was a natural cavity in the earth (Fig. III.1), obviously used in a cult, since it was connected to a nearby altar by a drainage channel, presumably for blood and drink offerings from the altar.

There were many other signs of religious activity in the area, including strata of ashes indicating repeated acts of burning and segments of animal horns, sometimes in geometric shapes. Postdating the child burial were the scattered skeletal remains of other children, this time infants. In a pit nearby were found the remains of a bronze axe and a carefully folded shield and *lituus**/trumpet (Fig. III.2), all attributes of power and nobility. Quite apart from the disturbing question raised here about child sacrifice among the Etruscans, the find is very suggestive in regard to the founding myth of Etruscan prophecy. In antiquity epileptics were perceived to have special spiritual powers, manifested when they were under the effects of seizure, and the combination of this eccentric child with the cavity in the earth and the attributes of *lucumones* at Tarquinii provides a most suggestive backdrop for the myth of the wise child Tages.

Also from the archaeological record comes another type of evidence, namely, representations in art that may show the myth. A number of scarabs, mostly dating to the fourth century BCE, show a fascinating scene in which one or more figures stand over a being emerging from the ground. Sometimes only the head is shown, but at other times, more of the figure appears, as on an example of the fourth–third century BCE in the Villa Giulia (Fig. III.3)[4] that seems to show "Tarchon" bending over and listening to "Tages," the latter an amorphous figure, somewhat small in scale compared with the tall male figure. He raises his finger in a pointing gesture that is commonly used in Etruscan art by someone explaining a prophecy.[5]

An equally important supplement to the literary sources

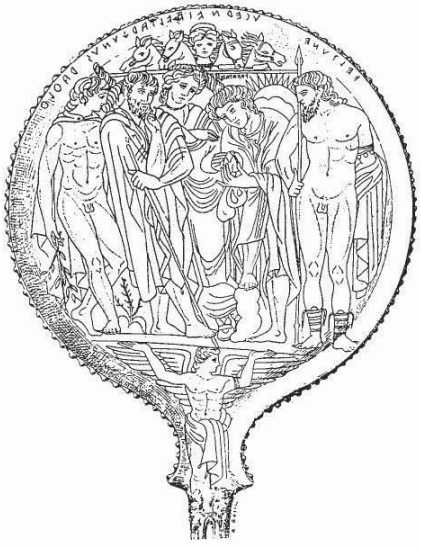

1
2
Ascia, scudo e tromba-lituo in bronzo dal deposito votivo 284 A-B all'ingresso dell'*edificio beta* (1 scala 1:6; 2 scala 1:9; 3 scala 1:8)

III.2. Votive bronze axe, shield, and lituus*/trumpet, found in front of Building Beta, Pian di Civita, Tarquinii. Early seventh century* BCE. *Tarquinia, Archaeological Museum. (After Bonghi Jovino and Chiaramonte Treré 1997, pl. 125.)*

is provided by the famous bronze mirror found in a tomb at Tuscania in 1898, dated to the third century BCE (Fig. III.4).[6] The identification of the figures has been thoroughly discussed since the seminal article by Pallottino in 1930, but scholars are far from final agreement on this subject. What is certain is that a youth labeled *pavatarχies*,[7] wearing a conical priest's cap, stands in a ritual pose with his left foot upon a rock and contemplates a liver. On the left, a bearded older man, with a similar conical hat laid back on his shoulder, assumes a position of listening and contemplating; he is labeled *avl tarχunus*.

No better explanation has been found than Pallottino's suggestion that we have here a version of the myth of Tages (*pava* may mean *puer* or child; *tarχies* could become Tages in Latin) instructing Tarchon (or perhaps his son, whose name would then be Avl) in *haruspicina*. The other figures present are somewhat difficult to account for. On the far right is a tall, bearded male, nude except for his boots and a mantle wrapped around his left arm; he holds a spear in his right hand. Labeled Veltune, he is often equated with the Etruscan god whom the Romans called Vertumnus (or Voltumna) and who was regarded as the principal deity of Etruria by Varro (*De lingua Latina* 5.46: Appendix B, Source no. VI.3). Since an overwhelming amount of evidence shows that Tinia was the chief Etruscan god (as noted, equivalent to Jupiter), some have argued that Veltune is simply another name for

111.3. Carnelian scarab with image of Tarchon and Tages (?). Fourth century BCE. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia (Photo: Courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale.)



111.4. Mirror with Pava Tarchies from Tuscania. Early third century BCE Florence, Archeological Museum. (After Torelli 1988, fig. 1.)

him; thus it is possible that we have here the god who was grandfather of Pava Tarchies.

As for the remaining figures, frustratingly little is clear. In the middle of the scene is a rather conspicuous lady labeled Ucernei, whose identity and reason for participation are quite unknown, while on the far left is a youth, nude except for his cloak; above him is the word *raΘlΘ*. The god Rath is named in inscriptions, but little is known about him, and the locative ending of the word on the mirror is puzzling.[8] It may identify him as a personification of the place where the prophesying of Tages took place.

Vegoia (Vecuvia)

Another highly important figure in Etruscan prophecy is the one called "Nymph Begoe" (or "Vegoia") in Latin texts. She is mentioned as the author or source of books on lightning that were kept in the Temple of Apollo (presumably on the Palatine; Servius, *Ad Aen.* 6.72) and is particularly recognized as a source for an account about the creation of the world. Her books are alluded to as *Libri Vegoici.* The thunder calendar attributed to the Roman savant Nigidius Figulus (surviving in a Greek translation; see Appendix A) may be derived from her prophecies. The Romanized expert on Etruscan lore, Tarquitius Priscus, a contemporary of Cicero, translated her books into Latin.

A precious scrap of prophecy exists in Latin, perhaps derived from the translations made by Tarquitius Priscus; the text pertains to the sanctity of boundaries and thus is preserved in the writing of field surveyors (see Appendix B, Source no. 11.1).[9] Vegoia delivered her prophecy to a certain Arruns Veltymnus, sometimes equated with Arruns, an early prince of Clusium, though with little firm evidence. The name Veltymnus is remarkably similar to Veltune on the Etruscan mirror, and perhaps in this case it again refers to the principal Etruscan deity, Tinia (or Jupiter), indicating that Arruns had a special relationship with this god.

The prophecy in Latin does make specific reference to Jupiter. It begins with the origin of the sea and sky and relates how Jupiter had worked out boundaries in Etruria. For those who violated these boundaries, disastrous consequences were predicted, including storms, whirlwinds, drought, hail, and mildew. Similar spectacular effects of weather are part of the predictions in the Brontoscopic Calendar of Nigidius, for example, for June 3, "If in any way it should thunder, there will be a scorching and drying wind, such that not only grains but even the soft fruits will be parched through and through and shrivel up." Or again, from Oct. 3, "If it thunders, it signifies hurricanes and dis-

turbances by which the trees will be overturned; there will be a great disruption in the affairs of common people." (See Appendix A.)

On the whole, the myth of the prophetess makes an interesting parallel to the story of Tages and Tarchon, with its combination of the instructor (Vegoia) and the disciple (Arruns) and with its reference to Veltune or Tinia, along with the connection with disasters of nature.

The writing down of the prophecy of Vegoia has been thought to date from the first century BCE (some five hundred years later than Arruns of Clusium), because it refers to the eighth *saeculum* or era of Etruscan history. The Etruscan doctrine of the periods of their sacred history is only dimly known and understood, but the eighth *saeculum* may be convincingly related to the last century of Etruscan civilization, when the Etruscans were being overrun by the Romans and a prophecy on boundaries might seem especially pertinent.

The figure known to the Romans as the Nymph Begoe has been identified in Etruscan art, twice on mirrors and once on a gold ring bezel. On a mirror from Vetulonia, ca. 300–275 BCE, a winged female figure appears, labeled Lasa Vecuvi(a), from which the translation to Latin of "Nymph Begoe" or "Vegoia" might easily have been made.[10] The figure appears in the exergue of the mirror, underneath an image of Tinia holding the thunderbolt, thus suggesting a connection between the two. On a mirror of unknown provenance in the Villa Giulia, of similar date, appears a winged figure in short chiton labeled Lasa Vecu. This time, however, the Lasa appears with Menrva (Fig. III.5). She seems to stand and listen, holding in her hand an object that is sometimes identified as a small lightning bolt, though more often as a plant. Either attribute would be acceptable for the prophetess who left a book on lightning but also had concern for boundaries, a matter of agrarian significance.

Finally, on the ring bezel, from Todi in Umbria (dated around the same time as the two preceding examples), the goddess is called Lasa Vecuvia, and is represented as a nude, nymphlike figure holding a mirror (Fig. III.6). From the numerous scenes of prophecy that appear on Etruscan mirrors, it may be conjectured that the mirror itself was an instrument of prophecy, as in the examples of *katoptromanteia* (conjuring with mirrors) attested in Greek and Roman ritual.[11] Rather like making predictions by gazing in a crystal ball or a vessel filled with liquid (*lekanomanteia*), one could discern the future by looking at a reflected but somewhat mysterious image in the shiny surface of the mirror. Several Etruscan mirrors show a female figure gazing intently into a mirror, seemingly not in the act of grooming but rather as a part of *katoptromanteia*. It may be hypothesized that Lasa Vecuvia prophesied on occasion by means of a mirror.

Cacu

Among the other scenes of prophecy on mirrors, the best known is that on the handsome grip mirror from Bolsena (Fig. III.7; ca. 300 BCE) that shows the long-haired, youthful Cacu in the act of playing his lyre and evidently singing an oracular message.[12] His pupil Artile sits at his feet and follows the prophecy with the aid of a booklike diptych containing an enigmatic script. On the right and on the left, soldiers approach, one with sword drawn, evidently in an ambush of the prophet. They are labeled as Avle Vipinas and Caile Vipinas, two brothers who are known from other sources, both Roman and Etruscan, as real historical figures, contemporary with the sixth-century kings of Rome. The same story appears on at least four ash urns coming from the territory of Clusium (Chiusi) dating to the second century BCE. All show the attempt to capture the prophet, but unfortunately we do not know the outcome of the situation.

The ambush to catch a seer is a well-known *topos* in Greek and Roman myth and legend, according to which you must seize the prophet to learn his secrets (cf. Silenus in Vergil, *Eclogue* 6; Proteus in Vergil, *Georgics* 4, and Picus and Faunus in Ovid, *Fasti* 2.385). Beyond this plausible hypothesis, there is little agreement. We do not know the subject of the prophecy, and though there are myths about Cacus in Latin literature (e.g., the brute of Vergil's *Aen.* 8.184–305), it is difficult to show how they may be related to the scene on the mirror. In the Roman versions, the threads of the myth have become so tangled that the fabric is no longer recognizable.

Other Prophetic Figures

A number of other little-known Etruscan figures appear in acts of prophecy or divination on Etruscan mirrors, both male and female. I have discussed these and the meager knowledge we have about them elsewhere.[13] There are also various figures from Greek mythology represented on mirrors as prophets or seers: Silenus, the seer Chalchas (Fig. III.8; represented in Etruria with wings and practicing divination with a liver), Orpheus, Teiresias. For most of these, evidence of scripture is lacking. Orpheus is an exception, since scenes of his head popping out of the ground with open mouth (the motif recalls Tages) include a tablet with writing upon it. These date around the same time as many of the other mirrors and gems with scenes of prophecy or divination, ca. 300 BCE. We have reviewed the principal evi-

111.5. Mirror with Lasa Vecu and Menrva. Early third century BCE. *Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia. (After* ES, *1.37.)*

dence for prophets in Etruria, with particular attention to the major figures, one male and one female—Tages (Pava Tarchies) and Nymph Begoe (Lasa Vecuvia). Their books, the *Libri Tagetici* and the *Libri Vegoici,* constituted a significant portion of Etruscan scripture. Given the scrappy nature of the evidence, it is not safe to attempt much generalization, but it is clear that these writings and related Etruscan myth and legend included themes of creation and history, as well as references to the power of the chief god in connection with the forces of nature. The writings were preserved and interpreted by patriarchal figures such as Tarchon and the leaders of individual city-states (the *duodecim populi,* or Twelve Peoples).

Clearly the texts were thick with regulations on rituals and legal matters. One category of the books of Tages gave illumination concerning the Afterlife. Beyond that, the Etruscan ritual books focused on instructions concerning prognostication. Repeated references to thunder and lightning, haruspication, the flight of birds, unusual animals or plants, and other features of ritual make it clear that the chief

III.6. Gold ring bezel with Lasa Vecuvia from Todi. Early third century BCE. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia. (Photo: Courtesy of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Etruria Meridionale.)

III.7. Mirror with Cacu being seized by Avle Vipinas and Caile Vipinas. Ca. 300 BCE. London, British Museum. (After Bonfante 1990, fig. 18.)

III.8. Mirror with Chalchas as haruspex. *Ca. 400 BCE. Vatican Museums. (After ES, 2.223.)*

emphasis in the *Etrusca disciplina* lay in teaching divination, so that priests and others might assist in discerning the will of the gods.

PRIESTS

Discussions of Etruscan priests usually begin with the well-known *haruspices,** the Etruscan diviners who served the Romans during the period of the Roman Republic and even sometimes during the Empire as well. Here we shall make a different kind of start and inquire whether it is possible to give a more general account of priesthood within Etruria. How do we define or recognize an Etruscan priest? Who served as priests and in what contexts? How did Etruscan priests resemble or differ from those of Greece and Rome? What were their duties?

The evidence is once again scanty, and barring spectacu-

lar new discoveries, we shall never be able to give very satisfactory answers to these questions or to come anywhere near the kind of responses provided in most of the chapters of *Pagan Priests, Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (1990), edited by Mary Beard and John North. They and their contributors make several points, however, that can illuminate our inquiry. The first has to do with the actual definition of "priest," which they provisionally relate to "the function of mediating between gods and men."[14] The mediation function, we shall see, is conspicuous in the surviving evidence about priests of Etruria. Also useful for our discussion is their generalization that the concept of such a mediator in ancient societies was very different from our own, beginning with the fact that the priest was not just a religious figure but often was a person of political or secular importance and duties; the separation of church and state was not an issue.[15] Another theme that recurs in Beard and North is the idea that priests would be marked out from ordinary people by some kind of distinctive, even paradoxical clothing, such as may be seen in modern priests, who may wear a skirt or turn their collar backwards, or nuns, who may wear medieval garments.[16]

Terminology

Was there an Etruscan word that would translate the Latin all-purpose term *sacerdos?* The most common word for priest in Etruscan was *cepen* (also *ceepena, cipen;* pl. perhaps *cepar*), a term that can already be found in the seventh century BCE.[17] The meaning of *cepen* was first suggested by a gloss from Varro (Servius, *Ad Aen.* 12.539), noting that the Sabine word for priest was *cupencus,* and it has been confirmed by its frequent occurrence in the *Liber Linteus* of Zagreb.[18]

Names for priestly office also may be learned from funerary inscriptions that list titles of the deceased in combination with *cepen* and other words. Four times *cepen* appears with another word whose root seems to refer to the activities of a magistrate[19] but may also be priestly: *maru* (occurring in Umbrian as *maron-*, the same word as Maro, the Latin cognomen of Vergil). This last term appears also in what seems to be a group plural form, *maruχva* or *marunuχva* (*TLE*, 194; *ET*, AT 1.61; *TLE*, 171; *ET*, AT 1.96.), which may be analogous to the Latin word *collegium,* used for a group of priests.[20] We also find *marunuχ spurana cepen* (*TLE*, 165; *ET*, AT 1.171), which makes a suggestive connection with the activity of the city-state (*spur*) and thus perhaps refers to a "public priest."

Yet another word for priest in general may be provided by *eisnev* (*TLE*, 195; *ET*, AT 1.1). A rare term, not nearly as common as *cepen,* it is found in an epitaph that seems to give a list of offices held and may be etymologically related to the Etruscan vocabulary of words referring to the gods (*ais-*, god, *aisna/eisna,* "pertaining to the gods").[21]

It has been recently argued that there is an Etruscan word for priestess, *hatrencu,* a term that occurs only in female graves and is limited in fact to the city of Vulci.[22] In the Hellenistic Tomb of the Inscriptions at Vulci were buried several women with the title but with different family names (*ET*, Vc 1.47, 49, 50, 55, 58), giving rise to the hypothesis that they were priestess members of a *collegium* that had a right to burial in a specific place. The finding of objects of considerable prestige in the tomb adds to the idea that these were elite women who belonged to a special caste.

Various other details emerge from close study of inscriptions. The famous funeral epitaph of L(a)ris Pulenas[23] gives a list of his achievements, including a phrase suggesting that he wrote a book on haruspication (*ziχ neθśrac*)[24] and referring to a rich life serving the gods Pacha (Fufluns), Catha, and (probably) Culśu. Elsewhere we have references to individuals as *marunuχ cepen* of Pacha (*TLE*, 137; *ET*, Ta 1.184) or as *maru* of both Pacha and Catha (*TLE*, 190; *ET*, AT 1.32). The evidence suggests that the Etruscans had a practice of naming individuals as being in charge of a particular cult. Roman religion is not lacking in parallels, but Beard has stressed that this is the basic pattern for the Greek priest (*hiereus*) or priestess, who attended only one deity and even only one sanctuary of that deity.[25]

From Latin texts comes information to confirm the idea of the individual or family serving a particular cult. When the Romans sacked Veii, and the youths came to carry away the statue of Juno, they feared to touch the statue because no one was *certae gentis sacerdos* (Livy 5.22.4; Appendix B, Source no. VI.5). We begin to think of a model like that in Rome of the families of the Potitii and Pinarii (Livy 1.7.12), who served the Roman altar of Hercules from earliest times (though once again the context could be Hellenic, since the god himself and King Evander, who established the cult, were Greek).

The idea of noble families handing down religious duties was certainly attested among the Etruscans, as we know from the sources regarding the *Etrusca disciplina.* In the story of Tages, Tarchon taught the other *principes* to use the *disciplina* in their own cities, and they in turn handed down the lore received from the child. Cicero (*Ad fam.* 6.6) referred to the idea that A. Caecina would learn about the *Etrusca disciplina* from his father. Claudius also noted the practice of families transmitting their knowledge (Tacitus, *Annales* 11.14), and earlier Cicero had talked about a decree of the sec-

ond century (*De div.* 1.92; Appendix B, Source no. IV.8) in which the Senate had actually ordered that the noble families (of the individual Etruscan peoples?) should hand over six (or possibly ten) of their sons to study and preserve the *disciplina*.[26]

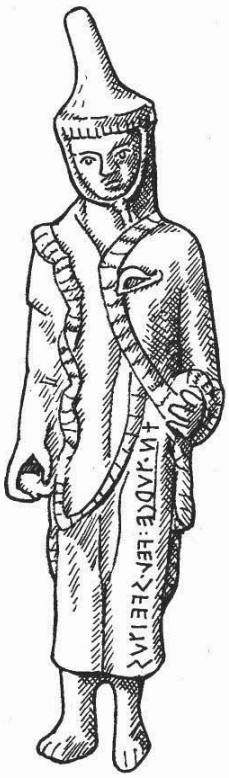
It would help to know more about the priest of the Fanum Voltumnae, the central federal sanctuary of the Twelve Peoples.[27] Our references to the role are brief but suggestive. Livy (5.1.5) relates that at the time of the war with Veii, that is, the early fourth century, the Etruscans were voting for the *sacerdos* and declined to elect a wealthy, prominent leader from Veii who expected to receive the honor. In retaliation, he withdrew the performers in the games, most of whom were his own slaves. When the Veientines later made him king, the other Etruscan states, disgusted, refused to help Veii against the Romans.

It is of interest to learn that the priest was chosen by election and that he was a man of high political standing, though not a king (Livy speaks of this role as being offensive to contemporary Etruscans). From the well-known inscription from Spello, dated to the reign of Constantine (333–337 CE), used as evidence for the Fanum Voltumnae,[28] we also learn that the Etruscans elected the *sacerdos* annually. There is considerable evidence that games were an important part of the annual ceremonies, and it is likely that the priest was normally expected to contribute to these (though the Veii story stresses that their leader had provided entertainers before he was elected; maybe all candidates for the priesthood were supposed to contribute).

Dress and Attributes of Priests

For our question regarding how to recognize an Etruscan priest, we may turn especially to archaeological evidence. Scholars are unanimous in identifying a number of figures as priestly by their characteristic garb.[29] As we have already noted, Pava Tarchies and Avl Tarchunus, engaged in haruspication (Fig. III.4), wear the special hat with a peak on top, often shown as twisted. Pava Tarchies' wearing of his hat on his head actually indicates that he *is* a priest; likewise, the hat on the shoulder of Tarchunus is consistent with him being in the act of becoming one. Similar images of the hat, which seems to be the forerunner of the peaked *apex** worn by the Roman "flame priests" (*flamines**),[30] can be found in a number of representations in Etruscan art.[31]

To show the characteristic hat and other features of the costume of the *haruspex,* the favorite representative is the fourth-century bronze statuette of Vel Sveitus in the Vatican (*TLE*, 736; *ET*, Vs 3.7; Fig. III.9).[32] It has an inscription:



III.9. Bronze statuette of priest, dedicated by Vel Sveitus. Fourth century BCE. Vatican Museums. (After Pfiffig 1975, 48, fig. 6.)

tn turce vel sveitus, "Vel Sveitus gave this," perhaps referring to a priest who made this a votive offering to his deity. The peak of the hat is tall and slightly flattened at the top; it makes a smooth transition downward, broadening into a tightly fitted cap with a slight brim, which seems to be tied on with rather large straps around the chin. The cap is clearer in some other specimens, for example, the alabaster ash urn of Arnth Remzna in the University Museum, Philadelphia (third century BCE; Fig. III.10).[33] Here the gentleman has a thick roll over the forehead and ears, held by straps that come down in front of the ears and are tied in a complex loop ending in a three-pointed tip. This kind of head covering seems to be the counterpart of the Roman *galerus,** a close-fitting cap made from animal skin worn by priests of

III.10. Alabaster ash urn of Arnth Remzna. Late third century BCE. Philadelphia, University Museum. (Photo: University of Pennsylvania Museum, neg. #26517-9.)

various ranks, sometimes with the *apex* and sometimes with a knob.[34]

The Vel Sveitus figure has other intriguing elements to his dress, especially the mantle with a rough fringe all along its edges; this, too, relates to an animal skin (probably sheep). The mantle is fastened with a large fibula of a type that goes back to the Archaic period. For comparison we may look at a statuette of a priest said to be from the Siena area and dating to the third century BCE (Fig. III.11).[35] For the animal skin, this remarkable figure substitutes the *laena,* a mantle worn from front to back so that a loop of drapery hangs down in front. In addition, he wears the *apex* and *galerus,* thus combining elements that appear together in the famous images of the *flamines* on the Ara Pacis Augustae.[36] The *apex* is of a different type here, however, as noted by Maggiani, with a soft pileus-type cap rather than the sharp point of the *apex.*[37]

It is worth noting that all the images cited here show the priest as clean shaven. This may indicate not that the individuals had to be youths, like Pava Tarchies, but merely that the beard had to be shaved at the time of initiation into the priesthood. Avl Tarchunus, a priest in training, is still bearded.

One of the well-known attributes of the Etruscan priest is the magic wand known in Latin as the *lituus,*[38] the curved staff especially associated with religious activity in Roman literature and appearing in Etruscan archaeological contexts that support the oft-repeated association with augury. The basic texts of Cicero (*De div.* 2.80; Appendix B, Source no. IV.7), Livy (1.18.7), and Vergil (*Aeneid* 7.187) describe it as a curved stick without knots, used first in Rome by Romulus. Servius (*Ad Aen.* 7.187) adds the interesting details that the wand was considered royal, and that it was used in settling disputes. The Archaic usage of the staff and probable origin in Etruria are indicated by its presence on the plaque from Murlo with seated dignitaries (ca. 570 BCE)[39] and on an oft-reproduced sandstone *cippus** from Fiesole (second half of the sixth century BCE; Fig. III.12),[40] which shows a figure with rather unusual dress: he wears high boots and a tall hat from which the locks peek out at the bottom, and he seems to have something draped across his left arm. He holds the wand aloft in his right.

A handsome bronze model of a *lituus* comes from a burial, no doubt elite, at Caere, also dating to the sixth century (Fig. III.13).[41] The wand is 36 cm. high but very thin, suggesting that it either was attached to a wooden frame or was in fact not intended for usage except as insignia in the Afterlife of the priest or magistrate who would have been buried with it. There are numerous other representations of the *lituus* in Etruria, and the wand continues to appear in Roman representations, for example, of the god Jupiter, and as an instrument of priests on coins and gems.[42]

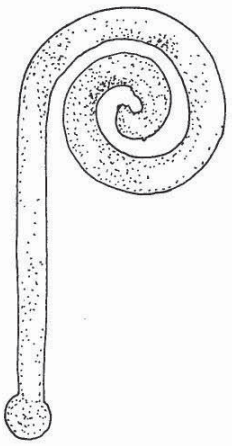
Without doubt, there were other ritual wands or staffs in Etruria, such as the bifurcated stick carried by priests represented on a black-figured amphora from Orvieto.[43] In this intriguing scene, four men seem to be involved in a ritual connected with a lightning bolt lodged upright in the

III.11. Bronze statuette of priest. Third century BCE. *Göttingen, Archäologisches Institut der Universität. (Photo: Stephan Eckhart.)*

III.12. Cippus *with relief of a priest (?) with* lituus. *Second half of sixth century* BCE. *Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. (Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.)*

ground. Their placement suggests that they formed a magic circle around it, perhaps in an act of rendering harmless the spot hit by the lightning. One priest standing next to the lightning bolt faces away from it and extends his right arm backward toward the bolt while he lifts in front of himself a wand with a bifurcation at the top.

There is one more reference to the attributes of Etruscan priests that cannot be omitted: the passage in Livy in which he describes the priests as marching to war (7.17.3–5; Appendix B, Source no. IV.10). The Tarquinians and (non-Etruscan) Faliscans routed the Romans in 356 BCE by a simple but remarkable strategy, arming their priests (*sacerdotes*) with torches and serpents, rushing down upon the Roman troops, and throwing them into a panic. The sight is recalled by the parade in the Tomb of the Typhon at Tarquinii, which probably features Etruscan priests or else performers dressed



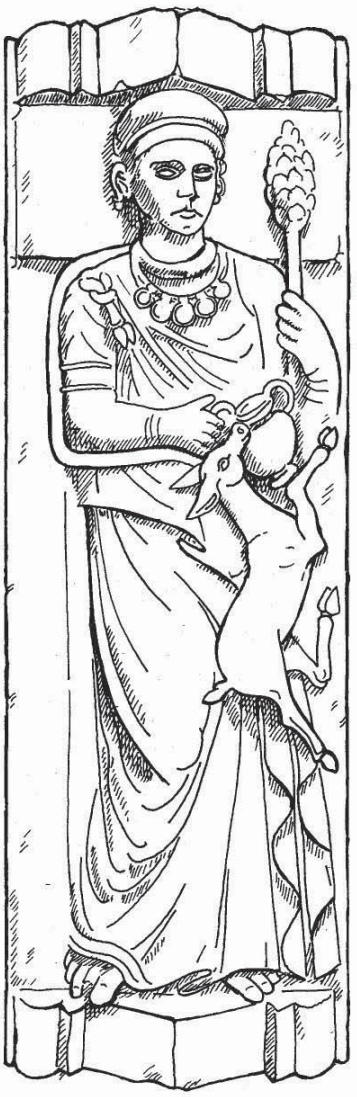
III.13. Bronze model of a lituus, *from Caere. Rome, Museo Etrusco di Villa Giulia. (After Pfiffig 1975, 48, fig. 5.)*

up as Underworld characters, with demonic faces and carrying serpents, torches, and *lituus*-shaped musical instruments (admittedly, they proceed at a more leisurely pace).[44]

Etruscan Priestesses

There is relatively little evidence for the appearance of Etruscan priestesses. A female figure on a sarcophagus in the British Museum, said to have come from the Tomb of the Triclinium at Tarquinii, has been referred to as a priestess of Fufluns (Bacchus); the hypothesis is not based on inscriptional evidence but rather on her appearance (Fig. III.14). She has the appropriate equipment for a Bacchant, or follower of Bacchus: a *thyrsos** and *kantharos.** In addition, a fawn is attending her, whom she seems to nurture by offering a drink, just as maenadic followers of Bacchus might have a small animal at hand for offering to the god.[45] Unfortunately, the date of the sarcophagus, probably third century BCE, is slightly too early to match with the famous description of the mania for Bacchus described by Livy that started in Etruria, spread to Rome, and led to the decree of the Roman Senate *de Bacchanalibus* (186 BCE; Livy 39.8.14; see Appendix B, Source no. VII.1).[46]

A group of five impressive stone sarcophagi for women's burials, also from Tarquinii and of the same date as the British Museum sarcophagus, may well show a number of priestesses. No comparable male sarcophagi have been reported from the tomb. These sarcophagi, discovered in the Tomba Bruschi in 1963, were not studied fully and put on display until 2004, when they were all shown at Viterbo in



III.14. Sarcophagus of a Bacchant. Third century BCE. London, British Museum. (After Pfiffig 1975, 28, fig. 1.)

an exhibition of materials from older excavations.[47] Each of the women wears a tall hat of some kind, and the hair seems to be arranged in a ritual way, with six major locks on each side of the head (like the *seni crines* of Roman brides and Vestal Virgins).[48] The clothing and jewelry are clearly indicative of elite status, and four of the ladies have an attribute that could imply some kind of special ritual activity. One holds a *kantharos,* two hold a sacrificial saucer (*patera**), and one holds a bird. It is tempting to relate this ensemble of sarcophagi to the group of burials in the Tomb of the Inscriptions at Vulci distinguished by the use of the term *hatrencu* and to hypothesize that those from the Tomba Bruschi may also relate to an agreement by which priestesses may be buried together.

Duties of the Priests

We turn now to the question of the duties of the priests of Etruria, a very difficult question indeed, and here at last we may consider more closely the *haruspices.* The name for *haruspex* in Etruscan, *netsvis,* is known from the bilingual inscription of a certain Larth Cafates, which is, to be sure, late and from outside Etruria proper (first century BCE, Pesaro; *TLE*, 697; *ET*, Um 1.7).[49] The word is etymologically related to that used to describe a book by Laris Pulenas, as noted above. But the interpretation of the inscription is complicated by the lack of a word-for-word translation: for the Etruscan we have *netsvis trutnvt frontac,* whereas in Latin we have *haruspex fulguriator.* It is exciting to see that we can learn another Etruscan name for a priest and that his duty has to do with interpreting lightning, but no one is sure exactly how to relate the one word *fulguriator* to the two *trutnvt frontac.* The second word sounds temptingly like the sound of thunder and in fact is like the Greek word for this phenomenon (*brontē*).[50] Perhaps Larth Cafates was one of those making use of the Brontoscopic Calendar of Nigidius Figulus, compiled around the same time (see Appendix A).

We have abundant references to the duties of the *haruspices* in Rome. The modern literature tends to show that we are comfortable, probably too much so, in our understanding of the *haruspices.* On the one hand, we know more about them than any other kind of Etruscan priestly functionaries, because the Romans mention them so frequently. On the other hand, they obviously were quite integrated into Roman culture, and it is all too easy to assume that evidence from Rome is transferable to Etruria.[51]

The literary evidence for *haruspices* in the Archaic period is meager,[52] though the passage from Livy (1.56.4) about the finding of the human head on the Capitoline, interpreted by *Etrusci vates,* has an authentic ring to it, especially since the seers were invited by the Etruscan king Tarquinius Superbus. The story of the old nobleman of Veii captured by the Romans and interpreting the omen of the overflow of the Alban Lake as portending the fall of Veii, told by both Cicero and Livy (*De div.* 1.44.100; Livy 5.15.4–11; Appendix B, Source nos. II.10 and II.11),[53] is absolutely believable, involving as it does a priest talking about how the water could be drained by a ritual act. Etruscan hydraulic skills were well known, and some of the most spectacular examples of the famous rock-cut channels known as *cuniculi* have been noted precisely around Veii.[54] While there is no specific reference to a *ritus Etruscus** connected with water control, it is likely enough that the Etruscan discipline contained instructions for this kind of problem associated with a very specific and fatal prophecy.

This incident occurred in connection with the fall of Veii in 396 BCE. MacBain argues, however, that the systematic interpretation of prodigies at Rome by the *haruspices* did not begin until the third century BCE, at the time when Etruria had been pacified by the Romans. He notes the persistence of the theme that these priests were of aristocratic birth and stresses that their presence in Rome was of considerable political significance.

THE NATURE OF OMENS

Among the many phenomena interpreted by Etruscan *haruspices* are listed lightning (numerous times), the sound of a trumpet in the sky, a sparrow with a grasshopper, the collapse of a rostrate column, a talking cow, oxen climbing stairs, and the birth of an androgyne (surprisingly numerous).[55] Undoubtedly the activity for which the *haruspices* were best known was the examining of entrails, in particular the liver. There is abundant evidence that the Etruscans themselves practiced the art, ranging from the representations of Pava Tarchies and Chalchas (Figs. III.4 and III.8) to the gem of Natis, which shows a colossal organ under interpretation (Fig. III.15),[56] to that quintessential monument of Etruscan culture, the Piacenza liver, discussed fully above by Larissa Bonfante (Fig. II.2 and pp. 10–11).[57] The study of entrails, of course, depended on the sacrifice of victims, and for the Romans at least, we know that the sacrifice often related to politics or war.[58]

Thunder and Lightning

In addition, we know that the *haruspices* employed a very rich lore of thunder and lightning, as can now be seen most vividly from Turfa's translation of the Brontoscopic Calendar (Appendix A). The sound of thunder could signal a wide

III.15. Carnelian scarab with image of a haruspex; *inscription:* natis. *Fourth century* BCE. *Berlin, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.)*

variety of effects, good and bad, concerning the weather, crops, animals, disease, war, government, and social conflict. As for lightning, Pliny and Seneca provide us with extensive information (Appendix B, Source nos. VIII.1, VIII.2, VIII.4, and VIII.8), so that we learn there were supposedly nine gods who threw the sacred thunderbolt (*manubia*). Using various sources, we have identified six of these by their Roman names: Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Vulcan, Mars, and Saturn.[59] Jupiter was said to be in control of three main types of bolts, and he often used his power in close consultation with group gods, such as the ones in the heavens of Martianus. The three types of bolts he might throw are (1) a benign bolt that served only to give warning; the god could decide on his own whether to send it; (2) a bolt that did both good and harm, for which he needed the approval of the Dii Consentes; and

III.16. Mirror with Menrva, Thesan, Tinia, and Thethis. Ca. 470 BCE. *Vatican Museums. (After* ES, *4.396.)*

III.17. Mirror with Menrva. Third century BCE. *Berlin, Antikenmuseums. (After* CSE, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland 4.24.)*

III.18. Painting of Vel Saties, from the François Tomb, Vulci. Watercolor copy by C. Ruspi, Vatican Museums. Fourth century BCE. *(After Buranelli 1992, 85.)*

(3) a completely destructive bolt, for which he had to have permission from the Dii Involuti, perhaps the same as the Favores Opertanei of Martianus (Secret Gods of Favor).

The Etruscan belief in a wide variety of lightning bolts is reflected in the many different sizes and shapes of such bolts depicted with Tinia, the Etruscan Jupiter, in art. On a late Archaic mirror in the Vatican (ca. 470 BCE; Fig. III.16), he clutches two types, and seems to contemplate which one to hurl. The theme is Greek, showing the chief god entreated on the left by Thesan, the mother of Memnon, and on the right by Thethis (Thetis), the mother of Achilles.[60] Naturally, he has two very different kinds of bolts to determine the fate of the two heroes. It is disappointing that there is so little evidence from art of the usage of the bolt by other deities; in fact, only Menrva appears with the bolt, again on a number

*III.19. Bronze handle of a pitcher (*Schnabelkanne*) with relief of Priest gazing upward. Fifth century* BCE. *Arezzo, Museo Archeologico Mecenate. (Photo: Soprintendenza Archeologica per la Toscana-Firenze.)*

of mirrors. One splendid example shows the goddess carrying a huge combination spear/lightning bolt (Fig. III.17).[61]

Birds

Ranking in importance with the *disciplina* concerning entrails and thunder and lightning was the use of augury from birds. This is a topic still insufficiently investigated in Etruscan art and religion,[62] but it is certain that it was a fairly important form of divination. Dionysios of Halikarnassos

refers to "Etruscan ornithoscopy" (τυρρηνική ορνιθοσκοπία) and Pliny notes (*HN* 10. 37) that there were types of birds *depicta in Etrusca disciplina* that could no longer be seen in his day; the passage has been taken to mean that there were illustrated bird books in the Etruscan sacred corpus.[63] Here he also refers to the observations about birds by Etruscan religious scholars such as Labeo and Nigidius, and in adjoining sections of the *Historia Naturalis* he makes observations about the omens from various birds: the crow has a persistent croak that is inauspicious (*HN* 10.30), and a gulping noise by a raven can be a very bad sign (*HN* 10. 33); the eagle owl, *bubo,* was the worst abomination (*HN* 30.34). Nigidius stated that the night owl (*noctua*) had nine cries (*HN* 10.39), though nothing is reported about the meaning of the various cries. He also noted a type of bird that broke eagles' eggs; again, we are not told the augural meaning, but the connection with Etruscan lore is evident.

Along with these citations we may mention the well-known passage in Livy (1.34.8–9; Appendix B, Source no. II.8) describing the omen of the eagle removing the cap of Tarquinius Priscus, then replacing it on the head of the king-to-be. The passage is noteworthy because it shows Roman recognition of the use of such a prodigy in an Etruscan political context. It gives evidence that Romans thought that it was not unusual for an Etruscan woman such as Tanaquil, Tarquin's wife, to be skilled in the interpretation of such a sign. A parallel image is provided by the famous painting at Vulci of the distinguished figure Vel Saties (Fig. III.18), in which the figure, surely a magistrate in his ceremonial garment, is involved in reading the omen supplied by one or more birds of the *picus* family.[64] The motif of the augur with his head turned up may be found in several other key representations, including an image on a *Schnabelkanne* (Fig. III.19), a type of pitcher known to be of ritual usage (see for example, the Chalchas mirror, Fig. III.8).[65]

Etruscan diviners, as we have seen, might serve as mediators to convey information from the gods transmitted by many different signs in nature, always with an eye on guides such as the various sacred texts we have mentioned. We have, however, no way of knowing if the Etruscans themselves were like the Romans in placing emphasis on the distinction between signs asked for (*impetrativa*) and signs that appeared voluntarily from the gods (*oblativa;* Servius *ad Aen.* 6.190). From the evidence we do have it is nevertheless possible to recognize this broad subdivision in divination. Thus the *impetrativa* embrace the signs of augury from birds and haruspication from entrails, while the *oblativa* include the occurrences of lightning and thunder and various prodigies; perhaps some omens of birds could also fall in this category.

NOTES

1. Cf. the discussion of the distinction (and similarities) between these two categories in Overholt 1989, 117–147 and Nissinen 2000, 108–109.

2. See below Appendix B, Sources, and my discussion of various authors who wrote about Etruscan religion in antiquity, above, pp. 1–4. The basic books for studying such sources are Buonamici 1939 and Thulin 1968.

3. Bonghi Jovino, 1986, esp. 84–85, 89–91, 99–101, 178–183.

4. Torelli 2000, 637 (no. 325) and pl. p. 529.

5. de Grummond, 2000, e.g., figs. 22–23.

6. The bibliography is considerable. See especially Pallottino 1979; Cristofani 1985, 4–20; de Grummond 2000, 30–32.

7. For the inscriptions on this mirror, see *ET*, AT 8.11.

8. On Rath, see especially Colonna 1987, 431–435, 441.

9. Heurgon 1959; Harris 1971, 31–40.

10. In general on the meaning of Lasa and in particular on Lasa Vecuvia, see Rallo 1974, 32, 35–36; de Grummond 2000, 33–36.

11. See de Grummond 2000, 56–62; de Grummond 2002, 75–76.

12. See Small 1982 for a full review of the evidence. More recently, see Luschi 1991; de Grummond 2000, 32–33.

13. de Grummond 2000, passim.

14. Beard and North 1990, 8.

15. Beard and North 1990, 6–9.

16. Beard and North 1990, 41, 105, 202.

17. Basic review with list of inscriptions in Torelli 1986, 221; see also Pallottino 1975, 226; Pfiffig 1975, 44. Jannot (1998, 139) lists plurals of *cepenar* and *cepnar,* but these do not occur in *ET*.

18. See *ET*, vol. 1, 87, for indexing of *cepen* (15 occurrences in the LL; AT 1.108; AV 4.1; *cepar* in LL VII.19).

19. *TLE*, 133, 137, 165, 171; *ET*, Ta 1.34, 1.184, AT 1.171, AT 1.96.

20. Torelli 1986, 221; Pallottino 1975, 229; Pfiffig 1975, 44.

21. Pfiffig 1975, 44; Pallottino 1975, 225.

22. Torelli 1986, 222; Nielsen 1990; Haynes 2000, 285–286.

23. *TLE*, 131; *ET*, 1.17. Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 149–151, is an excellent summary of the information to be obtained from the inscription.

24. For further discussion of words that have to do with haruspication, see below, p. 39.

25. Beard 1990, 45. Cf. Garland 1990, 77: "The most striking feature of Athenian priests and priestesses is their isolation."

26. Heurgon 1964, 230–231. See also Valerius Maximus 1.1 (Appendix B, Source no. IV.9), following Cicero closely, except that he seems to say that *Roman* boys were handed over to the Etruscans to study the discipline. He definitely uses ten for the number of youths, and some have corrected the reading in Cicero to be consistent with Valerius. Cf. p. 6, above, note 9.

27. The location is still unknown, but promising excavations have been undertaken in the "Fairgounds" (Campo della Fiera) on

the plain below the plateau of Orvieto, under the direction of Simonetta Stopponi and her collaborator Claudio Bizzarri. For earlier results in the Campo della Fiera, see Bruschetti 1999.

28. Pfiffig 1975, 70. One must always keep in mind that the edict does not actually name the Fanum Voltumnae, only Volsinii, where it was supposed to be located.

29. Maggiani 1984. Bonfante 2003, 53–54, 69, 75; Capdeville 1999, 114–115.

30. See Bonfante 1973, 587, 605.

31. Besides the ones discussed here, note the Tomba Golini "delle due Bighe": *Pittura etrusca a Orvieto*, 1982, fig. 18 (fourth century BCE; the deceased rides in his chariot); various ash urns from Chiusi: Jannot 1998, figs. 18, 78. It appears also on Etruscan coins of the Hellenistic period: Pfiffig 1975, 45, fig. 7.

32. Bonfante 2003, 53–54, fig. 137; Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 165; Pfiffig 1975, 48–49; Jannot 1998, 137, pl. K.

33. Turfa 2005, 263–265.

34. Bonfante 1973, 607.

35. Four statuettes from the same source were published in the catalog of the Venice show, Torelli 2000, pl. pp. 278–279, 592–593, cat. nos. 152–155 (all now in Göttingen). The discussion in the text focuses on no. 153, but it is worth noting that two of these have the rough, skinlike mantle. Three of the four wear the *apex*, having in this case a rather conical shape.

36. Kleiner 1992, fig. 74.

37. Maggiani 1989, 1557–1558.

38. Thulin 1968, pt. III, 113–114; Pfiffig 1975, 48, 99; Torelli 1986, 220; Jannot 1998, 141–142.

39. Gantz 1971.

40. *Die Welt der Etrusker* 1988, 211 (no. B.9.5).

41. Pfiffig 1975, 99; de Grummond 1996, 360–362.

42. Relief from Chiusi: Jannot 1998, fig. 21. Bronze statuette from the *stips* of the Lapis Niger, Roman Forum, ca. 550 BCE: Torelli 2000, 591 (no. 146) Coins: Pfiffig 1977, 99. Julius Caesar is associated with the *lituus* on the Mettius denarius, Augustus (as Jupiter) carries the *lituus* on the Gemma Augustea, and there are various other Roman examples: Kleiner 1992, figs. 25, 47.

43. Massa-Parault 1999, 82–83 and fig. 1. Another ritual staff, covered with knots, appears in funerary scenes as part of the equipment of the deceased, for example, in scenes of the journey of the dead from the Vanth Group of vessels from Orvieto (Pfiffig 1975, 177, fig. 73a–b). Here the deceased is shown once lying in a wagon and holding the knotted staff and another time on foot, led by Charu, using the staff to support himself as he walks. The knotted staff also appears in the Tomb of the Jugglers, Tarquinii, held by an elderly man who walks along with a boy, probably also in a journey of the deceased (Steingräber 1986, pl. 90).

44. Steingräber 1986, 352.

45. Banti 1973, 241 and pl. 40b; Pfiffig 1975, 28 and fig. 1. For the fawn drinking, cf. another possible priestess in the museum of Barbarano Romano, and a male sarcophagus from Tarquinii: Cristofani 1978, fig. 165. I thank Larissa Bonfante for assisting with documentation of these items.

46. See also Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 2, 288–291, for the relevant passages from Livy and the surviving text of the senatorial decree.

47. Moretti Sgubini 2004, 188–198.

48. Bonfante 1973, 596, 612.

49. Torelli 1986, 221; Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 69.

50. Bonfante and Bonfante 2002, 124, n. 29.

51. See esp. the salutary warnings of Jeffrey Tatum, in the Preface (above, p. xii). The *haruspices* were organized into a well-known *collegium* by the Romans, which reached the rather surprising size of sixty members. It is entirely possible that Etruscan city-states depended likewise on a large group of such seers, but so far the evidence is nonexistent. For a nuanced discussion, see Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 1, 19–20. For a general treatment of *haruspices* under the Romans, including the personal names of many priests, see Thulin 1968, III, 148–156.

52. Thulin 1968, pt. III, 131–132. See also MacBain 1982, 45, for an evaluation of the evidence.

53. Beard, North, and Price, 1998, vol. 1, 168–169. The story is another example of the theme of capturing the prophet to learn his secrets.

54. Barker and Rasmussen 1998, 197–198.

55. See Dumézil 1966, vol. 2, esp. 606–608. MacBain 1982, esp. the index of prodigies, 83–106, for a wide assortment.

56. Torelli 2000, 593 (no. 156, wrongly given as in Munich); ET, Vt G1.

57. Van der Meer 1987.

58. Beard, North, and Price 1998, vol. 1, 188, 326–327; vol. 2, 175–176.

59. Thulin 1968, I, 22–38. For a healthy skepticism concerning various contradictory scraps of information about which gods could throw lightning, see Capdeville 1989. He dismisses literary sources that suggest tantalizingly that the list of gods ought to include Auster (the West Wind), Hercules (Hercle), and Summanus (a Tinia of the Night).

60. Bloch and Minot 1986, 795, no. 33; (no. 33); ES, IV, pl. 396.

61. ES, III, pl. 246.

62. Interesting comments in Pairault-Massa 1985, 60–66, 78; Pfiffig 1975 has a short section, 150–152, and likewise Jannot 1998, 43–44; Dumézil 1970 ignores it. Basic for the study of the Roman tradition: Linderski 1986.

63. Heurgon 1964, 225–226. See recently McDonough 2003, 252.

64. Goidanich 1935.

65. Maggiani 1984, 144.

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